This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

A 930,751

1837
ARTES
SCIENTIA
VERITAS
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
TUEBOR
CIRCUMSPICE

839.88
B63p
tB812
1899

PAUL LANGE

AND

TORA PARSBERG

UNIV. OF MICH.

PAUL LANGE

AND

TORA PARSBERG

BY

BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN

BY

H. L. BRÆKSTAD

LONDON AND NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS
45 ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1899

Copyright 1898
All rights, including Acting rights in the English language, reserved

© 12-2/- 2 SMRSM

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

PAUL LANGE, *Minister of State.*
ARNE KRAFT, *his friend.*
THE KING'S CHAMBERLAIN.
BALKE, SANNE, PIENE, RAMM, *Members of the Storthing (Norwegian Parliament.)*
TWO PEASANT MEMBERS OF THE STORTHING.
THE PRESIDENT OF THE STORTHING.
OLD STORM, *Miss Parsberg's grandfather.*
BANG, *landed proprietor from Denmark.*
A BISHOP.
A COUNTY GOVERNOR.
KRISTIAN ÖSTLIE, *Paul Lange's valet.*
TORA PARSBERG.
MRS. BANG, *her aunt, a bishop's widow.*
MRS. HEIN, *Miss Parsberg's housekeeper.*
GUESTS, SERVANTS, ETC.

Libr.
Cashier
12-17-25
12594

PAUL LANGE
AND
TORA PARSBERG

ACT FIRST

An elegantly furnished drawing-room in a first-class hotel. On the right a door, and farther back a tile-stove, with a fire burning. Before the stove, but more to the front, a writing-table. At the back a folding door. On the left a door. The doors open outwards from the room.

SCENE I.

PAUL LANGE *in a winter overcoat, holding one glove in his hand, and taking off the other.*
ÖSTLIE, *a young man in a long livery coat, wearing gloves and carrying a basket.*

PAUL LANGE.

Well, here we are!—Put the basket there!
[*Pointing to the writing-table.* ÖSTLIE *puts*

basket on table. Takes LANGE'S *hat and coat, and goes out with them.* LANGE *goes to the writing-table, opens the basket, carefully takes out three bouquets, and places them on the table, one after the other.* ÖSTLIE *returns, dressed in a neat livery, which he wears with a certain distinction.* LANGE *sits down at the writing-table, takes some visiting cards and envelopes to fit; then an elegantly bound book with "Diary" in large gilt letters on the cover. He studies the entries on various pages. Puts a card in an envelope, which he then addresses.*]

Hold up the blue one! [*The servant does so.*] Yes, that one will do.

[*He places the envelope in the bouquet, which* ÖSTLIE *places carefully in the basket.* LANGE *looks on as he does it. He next takes another card and another envelope, which he addresses, after having consulted his diary.*]

The yellow one, Östlie! Yes, that one. Hold it up—that will do! Yes, it's uncommonly pretty. [*Puts the envelope in the bouquet.*] Be careful!

[ÖSTLIE *places the bouquet in the basket beside the other.* LANGE *again examines his diary, and puts another card in an envelope and addresses it.*]

Oh, hold up the two others together! The

white one, of course, is for the newly-married couple. Now, about the other! But will that suit her . . .? Just hold up the yellow one again.

[ÖSTLIE *does so.* LANGE *looks at the two bouquets, takes out the envelope from the yellow one, places it in the other, and the envelope which he has last addressed, in the yellow bouquet. Looks at the white bouquet.*]

Well, I need not put any address on this?

ÖSTLIE.

[*Who has been holding up the white bouquet.*] No, your Excellency.

PAUL LANGE.

Have orders been given to put the horses to?

ÖSTLIE.

Yes, your Excellency.

PAUL LANGE.

Let the coachman drive you as quickly as possible, for I shall want you here.

ÖSTLIE.

I have got one of the waiters to remain in the anteroom while I am away.

PAUL LANGE.

He is a trustworthy person?

ÖSTLIE.

He will do what I tell him, at any rate. We have employed him before.

PAUL LANGE.

All the same . . . Come back again as soon as possible. [ÖSTLIE *going.*] Stop—! I am not so sure that it wasn't better as I had it before?—Just hold up the yellow and the blue together. [ÖSTLIE *sets down the basket and takes out the bouquets.*] Be careful! There!—yes, I really think——! [*Approaches the bouquets as if to change the envelopes.*] Well, I don't know—of course not! Let them be as they are!

[ÖSTLIE *puts back the bouquets and goes.*]

The telegrams! . . . Well, some one else can take them. [*Takes up the diary.*] Were there not three to-day? [*Looks at the diary.*] No, only two.

[*Takes telegram-forms from a bundle lying on the table. Writes as if deliberating. Rings.* WAITER *enters.*]

Let a messenger take these two telegrams to the telegraph office.

WAITER.

Yes, your Excellency. [LANGE *takes out his purse.*] The porter can pay for them.

PAUL LANGE.

No, I don't want anything of that sort mixed up

in my account. So, as Östlie is not here, take the money.

[WAITER *goes.* LANGE *advances to the front. Looks at his watch. A knock. Turns round in surprise. Goes towards the door.*]

Who can that be? So early? Come in!

[WAITER, *still with the telegrams in his hand, gives* LANGE *a visiting card.* LANGE *takes card and looks at it. In an undertone.*]

Is this gentleman out there? In the anteroom?

WAITER.

Yes, your Excellency.

PAUL LANGE.

Here! If a letter should come for me, you will bring it in—no matter who is here.

WAITER.

Yes, your Excellency. Shall I ask the Chamberlain to come in?

PAUL LANGE.

I will go myself. You attend to your errand!

WAITER.

Yes, your Excellency.

[LANGE *goes out through the door in the background, followed by the servant.*]

SCENE II.

Exchange of greetings heard from the anteroom.

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*In the doorway.*] The same suite of rooms, I believe, which your Excellency had the last time?

PAUL LANGE.

[*After him, in the doorway.*] Always the same.

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Enters, dressed in elegant morning suit, gloved, and hat in hand.*] Most charming rooms!

PAUL LANGE.

Really, I cannot restrain my admiration—to see you, sir, so early astir!

CHAMBERLAIN.

Ah, there, you see, how little people know one another. How long is it since first we met? At Miss Parsberg's, I believe?

PAUL LANGE.

Yes, I remember. It was when Miss Parsberg set up her own establishment and gave her first party.

CHAMBERLAIN.

À propos of Miss Parsberg! You have received your invitation?

PAUL LANGE.

For Monday? Yes.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Miss Parsberg has again done me the honour of asking me to assist her to receive her guests.

PAUL LANGE.

Will there not be some difficulty about that as long as the King is in town?

CHAMBERLAIN.

He happens to be leaving on Monday.

PAUL LANGE.

Ah, that's true!

CHAMBERLAIN.

There has been no end of worry during his visit this time!

PAUL LANGE.

But it does not seem to have told upon you. You are looking remarkably well—the same as ever.

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Looking at him.*] How any one, so early in the morning, can——? [LANGE *laughs.*] But let us be on our dignity! I come on an errand from the King.

PAUL LANGE.

Ah, indeed!

CHAMBERLAIN.

As mediator between the powers—as ambassador.

PAUL LANGE.

Will the ambassador be pleased to take a seat?

CHAMBERLAIN.

Not before I have unburdened myself. Well, you guess, of course, what it is all about?

PAUL LANGE.

I think I have an inkling.

CHAMBERLAIN.

The King cannot relinquish the belief that you will do your utmost to keep the Government in office.

PAUL LANGE.

Well, that is no reason why we shouldn't sit down.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Not at all; let us sit down. [*They sit down.*]

PAUL LANGE.

I see in this morning's papers that a vote of want of confidence is to be moved.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, the debate will come on in four days.

PAUL LANGE.

That's to say . . . . Friday, Saturday, Sunday . . . on Monday, then?

CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, Monday forenoon.

PAUL LANGE.

But they will not be able to get through with it in the forenoon.

CHAMBERLAIN.

That will be unfortunate for Miss Parsberg's party?

PAUL LANGE.

Yes, indeed! Many of the members are going, are they not? The occasion is——

CHAMBERLAIN.

—— The great annual celebration in memory of her uncle.

PAUL LANGE.

[*With a smile.*] Then no doubt the President will arrange matters.

CHAMBERLAIN.

One's country before everything! [LANGE *smiles.*] It will scarcely be a day of rejoicing for the head of the Government.

PAUL LANGE.

I pity the old man—more than I can say.

CHAMBERLAIN.

The King knows that, and for that reason he does not understand——?

[*Stops and looks at* LANGE.]

PAUL LANGE.

But I have explained all that to his Majesty.

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] The party wrangling; yes, true——?

PAUL LANGE.

I cannot endure it.

CHAMBERLAIN.

You have sent in your resignation—we can all understand that. But the King does not understand why your Excellency should not put in a good word for your old chief.—It would have great effect just now!

PAUL LANGE.

The King overrates——

CHAMBERLAIN.

No one can overrate the effect of a speech by you just as you are resigning.

PAUL LANGE.

I thank you!

CHAMBERLAIN.

It is the King himself who says it.

PAUL LANGE.

Then once again I thank you!

CHAMBERLAIN.

The many great measures on the programme——?

PAUL LANGE.

They are in no danger. All are agreed as to them—the whole party.

CHAMBERLAIN.

But his Majesty would like to see the old man—after all his great services—carry them through himself to victory.

PAUL LANGE.

No one can wish that more heartily than I.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Then show it! You have it in your power. LANGE *shakes his head.*] Suppose, that on Monday you secure a majority for the old man? He can make a great deal out of a majority. He is very adroit.

PAUL LANGE.

A singularly adroit parliamentary hand.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, that's about all he is now.

PAUL LANGE.

That remark—was that the King's?

CHAMBERLAIN.

No, it is mine. [*In a more persuasive tone.*] You, your Excellency, who have so many interests, that you want to live and work for——?

PAUL LANGE.

It is out of consideration for these interests that I am retiring.

CHAMBERLAIN.

But these very interests will some time compel you to come to the front again.

PAUL LANGE.

For that reason I wish to husband my strength. I have told the King so.

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Cautiously.*] Is not this the third time that your Excellency has retired from political life?

PAUL LANGE.

Not from political life, but from party wrangling——!

CHAMBERLAIN.

Each time it becomes more difficult to get back again.

PAUL LANGE.

I can see that, too.

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*More confidentially.*] Why not accept help?

[*Silence.*]

PAUL LANGE.

[*Attentively.*] In what way?

CHAMBERLAIN.

I understand you to be of opinion that, with all his faults, the old Chief is, after all, the force which can best unite the nation.

PAUL LANGE.

That is my opinion. Absolutely.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Why not say so, then? On Monday?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Rising.*] I wish to hold my strength in reserve,—to stand apart. And then, just as I am resigning, you would have me take a side? [*Silence.*]

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Remains seated.*] Who knows if you would not gain by it? [LANGE *looks at him.*] You might be allotted some compensation.

PAUL LANGE.

Compensation?

CHAMBERLAIN.

It would be only reasonable. [*Silence.*]

PAUL LANGE.

Is this your errand?

CHAMBERLAIN.

This is my errand.

[*At this moment a gentle knock is heard at the door. The* CHAMBERLAIN *rises.*]

PAUL LANGE.

Excuse me! [*Goes to the door and opens it slightly.*] Is it you, Östlie? [*He opens the door wide.* ÖSTLIE *enters.*] You have been quick! Have you any letter?

ÖSTLIE.

No. [*In an undertone.*] Mr. Arne Kraft.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Looks pleased; also in an undertone.*] Is he here?

ÖSTLIE.

Yes, your Excellency.

PAUL LANGE.

[*As before.*] Show him in. [*Points to the left.*] See that the portière is drawn!

[ÖSTLIE *goes out.*]

CHAMBERLAIN.

Was not that servant once in Miss Parsberg's service? By the way, what is his name?

PAUL LANGE.

Kristian Östlie, son of old Östlie——

CHAMBERLAIN.

——Whom she inherited from her uncle along with everything else?

PAUL LANGE.

He was by no means the least valuable part of the inheritance.

CHAMBERLAIN.

No; old Östlie is perfect.

PAUL LANGE.

The son is still more perfect.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Now I remember! He went with Miss Parsberg to England? And he speaks English?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Surprised.*] Y—e—s?

CHAMBERLAIN.

That is most opportune. For the compensation I mentioned . . . [*Stops and looks at* LANGE.]

PAUL LANGE.

[*Laughing.*] No, I never try to guess riddles.

CHAMBERLAIN.

The post of Minister in London is vacant.

PAUL LANGE.

Vacant? Is it vacant?

CHAMBERLAIN.

I know you have been wishing for that.

PAUL LANGE.

Some time in the future—yes. I cannot imagine a better retreat. But I had no idea that it was vacant.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Of all who could be mentioned in connection with it, your Excellency is the man who knows England best. [LANGE *remains silent.*] If your Excellency should have any fear of losing a political advantage through putting in a good word for your old Chief on Monday, then here is compensation. [LANGE *remains silent.*] In London your Excellency can quietly await your time. There you can enjoy your well-earned leisure—which no one knows better how to employ. [LANGE *smiles and bows.* CHAMBERLAIN *bowing.*] His Majesty's words—and mine as well! [LANGE *smiles, and bows still lower.*] With this I have executed my royal errand!

And now, by heavens, I cannot stand any more of it—not in one dose. [*Puts down his hat.*] Just fancy, to make me sit here and wrap up the old rascal in cotton-wool—as if he were a sickly little chicken! Faugh—the devil take it!

PAUL LANGE.

[*Laughing.*] You could not quite restrain yourself, however! You put in a little—parenthesis!

CHAMBERLAIN.

Parentheses are my safety-valves! Through the evil dispensations of Providence I, old salt though I am, have been transformed into an elegantly bound book—with some awkward parentheses in it.

By heavens, I must have a quid on the top of all this sickly political talk!

[*While taking out his tobacco-box, he makes a peculiar noise, as if clearing his throat.*]

Hvass! Hvass! [*Takes a quid.*] The longer I live the more heartily do I detest politicians!

PAUL LANGE.

But whom do you call politicians? You don't include——?

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Interrupting him energetically.*] Yes, 'pon my soul, all of them! As men they may be right

enough; but as politicians——! From the Shahs, the Mikados, the Cæsars, the Kings, down to the newspaper-hacks . . . Yes, if I had the power to create peace on earth, I would take a long broom —a broom with a long handle I mean—so long that it should reach right down to Constantinople . . . .

PAUL LANGE.

Why not to Japan?

CHAMBERLAIN.

You are right! Why not to Japan at once? And south to Madagascar! To the Cape!!

'Pon my soul, I would sweep the whole lot of them right into the sea! With all their talk and despatches and decorations and womanfolk and dinners and ceremonies;—it would be the worse for the fishes, for they would die of it.

And then we other folks should get some peace —for a while, at any rate! For the rabble would grow up again, I suppose. I often think that, after all, God must have another life in store for us, although it is the parsons who say it. For the politicians have vitiated this life to such an extent that it will soon be impossible to exist. We must get away from it.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Laughing loudly.*] If only the politicians do not get away along with you?

CHAMBERLAIN.

I only hope that they will be stopped on the way and transported to another place.

[*Takes up his hat.*]

Accept the King's offer, my friend, and tell the whole lot to go to the——h'm! [*Bowing ceremoniously.*] I have the honour!

PAUL LANGE.

[*Also ceremoniously.*] May I ask you to convey to the King my most humble thanks?

I do not think it would be wise to show myself at the palace until my resignation has been accepted.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Is that all your Excellency has to say in reply?

PAUL LANGE.

Yes.

CHAMBERLAIN.

And if his Majesty should ask anything with regard to the Ambassadorship, what am I to say?

PAUL LANGE.

That it will weigh greatly with me. [*Silence.*]

CHAMBERLAIN.

Nothing more?

PAUL LANGE.

I can say nothing more for the present.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Au revoir!

PAUL LANGE.

Au revoir!

[*Accompanies the* CHAMBERLAIN *out into the anteroom.*]

SCENE III.

Shortly afterwards PAUL LANGE *and* ARNE KRAFT *enter from the left;* LANGE *with his arm across* KRAFT'S *shoulders.*

ARNE KRAFT.

[*With a bundle of papers in his hands.*] So I have got out of my confinement at last!

PAUL LANGE.

You must really excuse me! But now we will take care to be uninterrupted [*rings*], and for a long while. [ÖSTLIE *enters.*]

I am not at home. Not to any one. Take my hat and coat out of the hall, so that they cannot be seen. [ÖSTLIE *is going.*]

But if any letter should come, then——

ÖSTLIE.

Yes, your Excellency! [*Goes.*]

ARNE KRAFT.

Good heavens! if I were to have as many secrets as you have——

PAUL LANGE.

Hah, hah!

ARNE KRAFT.

And had so many people to consider!

PAUL LANGE.

[*Gaily.*] Yes, that's the worst part of it!

ARNE KRAFT.

How many bouquets have you sent out into the world to-day?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Roguishly.*] Not a single one!

ARNE KRAFT.

Oh! oh! Flowers must be dear just now?

PAUL LANGE.

They are, indeed! Exorbitantly dear!

ARNE KRAFT.

Well, one can do that sort of thing as long as the

generous heart has a full purse. But if I had to distribute so many bouquets and telegrams every day, I should be sending some of them wrong.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Laughing.*] I quite believe you! But now you must be a good fellow! Now we are going to have a nice quiet chat. I am delighted to have a chance of talking about something else than politics. I have been worried by callers every moment of the day ever since I sent in my resignation. Yesterday even the President of the Storthing was here!

ARNE KRAFT.

I, too, must congratulate you on your resignation. That was well done!

PAUL LANGE.

Oh, I ought to have done it long ago. But there are so many things to be considered——

ARNE KRAFT.

[*Laughs.*] Yes, you have always had plenty of things to consider! By the way—he should have gone, not you! [LANGE *shrugs his shoulders.*]

And then I must thank you for your scheme for Compulsory Old Age Pensions. I have gone into it carefully. [*He opens the bundle of papers.*]

I think it masterly. There you have found the solu-

tion! Sooner or later it will be carried out. Thanks for lending it me. [*Puts the papers on the table.*]

PAUL LANGE.

[*Takes them and locks them in his writing-table.*] I am pleased to hear you say that.

ARNE KRAFT.

It is quite worthy of all that you have already achieved—Right of Equal Inheritance for Women, Women's Property Act, and the Humanisation of our Criminal Law——

PAUL LANGE.

[*Interrupting him.*] I am so glad you think so! Come, let us sit down and take things comfortably.

[*They both sit down by the table, close together.*]

ARNE KRAFT.

That is what *I* call politics!

PAUL LANGE.

And I too!

ARNE KRAFT.

The interminable struggle for existence and for power between nations and between parties—faugh! I tell you they will tear each other to pieces, so that there will be only too big blood-hounds left, one on each side of the ocean. And they won't be able to get at each other's throats!

PAUL LANGE.

Hah, hah! You are in a good humour to-day?

ARNE KRAFT.

Yes, I am. I am glad that the motion for a vote of want of confidence has been decided upon at last.

PAUL LANGE.

Are you really?

ARNE KRAFT.

Of course I am! Confound it all! let us have everything aboveboard. Are you not glad?

PAUL LANGE.

I don't believe in these great public humiliations. Let us keep a straight course ahead; to me that is the chief thing.

ARNE KRAFT.

But when we are prevented from doing so?

PAUL LANGE.

In a couple of years——! By that time he will have dropped off of himself.

ARNE KRAFT.

[*Jumps up.*] And are the people to wait for that? And suffer from all sorts of evil influences in the meantime? You cannot mean that?

PAUL LANGE.

Do sit down! Take things calmly.

ARNE KRAFT.

[*Sits down.*] I have come to ask you not to give way to the pressure now being put upon you.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Jumps up.*] Good God! You, too? Am I never to have peace?

ARNE KRAFT.

[*As if hurt.*] What prevents you?—Yourself, do you mean—or us?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Also as if hurt.*] Myself? What do you mean?

ARNE KRAFT.

That you can never with a good conscience go and support him on Monday. You, least of all!

PAUL LANGE.

And why?

ARNE KRAFT.

[*Jumps up.*] Why? Why? Do you not remember, when you made a concession on behalf of

the Government to our—our so-called ally, that the chief wanted the responsibility of it thrown upon you? Upon you alone! The rascal!

PAUL LANGE.

There, there——!

ARNE KRAFT.

I have a letter from you saying that you acted in full agreement with him.

PAUL LANGE.

That I am ready to tell him at any time to his face!

ARNE KRAFT.

Well, then! Do you not remember that he wrote you a long statement, which he read to his colleagues, and got them to sanction, and then sent you something quite different? A totally different letter of which they knew nothing.

PAUL LANGE.

Yes, yes. But why bring up such trifles?

ARNE KRAFT.

[*Greatly surprised.*] "Trifles!" By heavens, you did not call them trifles at the time. At the time, when you sought my help. [*Repeats to himself.*] "Trifles? Trifles?"

PAUL LANGE.

Do you think I have forgotten it? But surely there are other things to be remembered about the man besides his faults. His lifelong labour, his age! And that it is for us he has wrecked his health.

ARNE KRAFT.

We will bear that in mind! But not to the detriment of the people.—What do the laws which you have carried through aim at? And the reforms which you now live for?

PAUL LANGE.

What do they aim at?

ARNE CRAFT.

Yes.

PAUL LANGE.

At justice, of course. At greater justice.

ARNE KRAFT.

And you will give your support to a dishonest man at the head of the State.

PAUL LANGE.

Dishonest?

ARNE KRAFT.

[*Without letting himself be interrupted, in a louder tone.*] Yes, untrustworthy! untruthful! bad!

PAUL LANGE.

You are not a politician.

ARNE KRAFT.

What has that got to do with the matter?

PAUL LANGE.

I will tell you. If you lived in a land where truth and falsehood were not always to be distinguished from each other; where you heard great words every day which really meant nothing—they were only paper-money, promissory notes; whether they would ever be honoured or not no one could tell . . . . well, what would you do then? Would you take them as genuine?

ARNE KRAFT.

Surely you need not ask?

PAUL LANGE.

No. For you have seen much of the world; you know all about it. But I can assure you that this is precisely the case with politicians. They are just such a race of people. When they talk about honesty and dishonesty, about liberty and their country, about faithlessness and treachery, these big words do not mean the same to them as to us. They are merely the pieces in a game of chess. They are simply brought out when there

is a game to be won with them. At other times they are left lying quietly in the drawer.

ARNE KRAFT.

Well, what do you mean by it all?

PAUL LANGE.

You will understand, of course, that men who live in such a milieu cannot really have very firm ground under their feet. They can easily make a slip. They must not be judged too harshly.

Now, don't get impatient! It is so! Neither you nor I can alter it. I repeat: they are a race by themselves. . . .

ARNE KRAFT.

I have many honest friends among our politicians.

PAUL LANGE.

And so have I. Excellent friends! But I do not always take them seriously.

ARNE KRAFT.

You must not be surprised if we others do. You are on a false track here.

PAUL LANGE.

I? Remember those politicians of the "give-and-take" class, how common they are;—I'll

go further and say—of the intimate "give and take" class.

ARNE KRAFT.

[*Interrupting.*] Ah, you have made your studies out in the big countries. There it may be so.

PAUL LANGE.

I will tell you, my friend: when politics become what you and I too mean by them—when they become that and nothing else, well, then a new set of men will arise. Then you may apply your strict standards. But now? It would be exceedingly harsh.

ARNE KRAFT.

I begin to have misgivings; do you really intend to support him on Monday?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Hurt.*] I have not said so.

ARNE KRAFT.

But you will do it?

PAUL LANGE.

[*With dignity.*] That depends.

ARNE KRAFT.

I have come to warn you! In this matter the

best men and women in the country are on the watch.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Greatly hurt.*] Whatever step I take will be taken with the fullest conviction. And I shall know how to defend it. [*Changes his tone.*] But, my old friend, must we really be pittedagainst each other like this?

ARNE KRAFT.

[*Warmly.*] No, that we must not! We are too old friends for that! But will you listen to my view of the matter?

PAUL LANGE.

Of course.

ARNE KRAFT.

You said once, that it makes men hardy to live so far north, that it makes men hardy both in nerve and will.

PAUL LANGE.

Yes. Isn't it true?

ARNE KRAFT.

Yes. But then, my friend, we must be hardened for something more than enduring cold.

The danger for us is that we may become a frost-bound people, without any enthusiasm, without fertility in conception or action. We have come very

near to that. The real struggle with us has always been this—to cut ourselves free from the ice.

That struggle has never been so successful as now. We have had one great victory after another, and now, last of all, our political victory. [*Passionately.*] And now he is ruining everything for us—with his ambitious schemes, with his deceitfulness!

Everything that is mean is again to the front! Suspicion, accusation, persecution—all these are rife! We have drifted back into the ice. Young people have grown old through it.

Other nations have not this great and constant danger before them. To them a national disappointment is like a short winter, a kind of rest. To us it is every time a matter of life or death!

No, my friend—of all cold things deceit is the coldest. This is not the first time we have had to face it in our history. But it must be the last! [*Going nearer to him.*] Paul Lange, my friend, it must be the last!

PAUL LANGE.

Well, what do you propose?

ARNE KRAFT.

Nothing that is inconsistent with your character. Only you must not support him on Monday.

PAUL LANGE.

You see things in an ideal light. And so far——

But here there are men and women concerned! —How dear he has been to all of us!

ARNE KRAFT.

If I could take him in my arms and carry him away from it all, do you doubt that I would do it? —that I would look upon it as the greatest day of my life?

PAUL LANGE.

No, no! [*A knock. Both are surprised.*] [*In a whisper.*] Oh!—The letter! [*Goes towards the door in the background.*] Come in!

[ÖSTLIE *opens the door just sufficient to enter.*] Is there a letter?

ÖSTLIE.

No, your Excellency. It is . . .

[*Approaches* LANGE *and speaks in a whisper.* KRAFT *walks apart from them towards the front, smiling.*]

PAUL LANGE.

[*Takes one step backwards. In an undertone.*] Here do you say?

[*He seems on the point of hastening out, but hesitates and speaks in a whisper to* ÖSTLIE,

who goes out. He then approaches KRAFT.]

You must not take it amiss; but—sometimes things will happen that one cannot foresee.

ARNE KRAFT.

Mysteries again! I expect you have a hiding-place on the other side also?

I suppose it means I had better go.

PAUL LANGE.

No. Well, that is to say—yes! But you mustn't be angry with me.

ARNE KRAFT.

Oh, don't mention it! Give me a definite promise, then.

PAUL LANGE.

This very moment . . . ? Can't you wait until the afternoon?

ARNE KRAFT.

Will he be less guilty in the afternoon? Or will justice have a different rate of exchange, say, at five o'clock?

PAUL LANGE.

You are right. Very well, then.

ARNE KRAFT.

[*Eagerly.*] You promise us?

PAUL LANGE.

I promise you.

ARNE KRAFT.

Ah!—but not because you want to get rid of me . . . ?

PAUL LANGE.

No, no! I promise to stop away on Monday.

ARNE KRAFT.

[*Earnestly.*] We have your word? Your solemn word?

PAUL LANGE.

Yes! [*Gives him his hand.*]

ARNE KRAFT.

Thanks! That's what I expected of you! I may as well tell you I should not have gone without it. Good-bye!

PAUL LANGE.

You have always wished me well! [*Places his arm across his shoulders as they go towards the back.*] I have so much to thank you for.

ARNE KRAFT.

And I you. Yes, now I am quite happy! For your sake too! Now I know that all will go well with you.

PAUL LANGE.

What do you mean by that?

ARNE KRAFT.

[*Stops and looks at him.*] You must tell me this before I go. You spoke of "Trifles" just now. But I know now that when you wrote to me about the perfidy of our Chief, there was something you concealed. Something I have come to hear of since. Quite lately.

PAUL LANGE.

And that is——?

ARNE KRAFT.

That you took it so terribly to heart!—beyond all measure! Is it true?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Uneasily.*] It was just after my wife's death. I was greatly upset at the time.

ARNE KRAFT.

They say—I scarcely know how to express it; it has taken such a hold of me. But I cannot help speaking of it now that I am face to face with you again.—They say, you had made up your mind not to survive it!—My dear friend!

PAUL LANGE.

They say so much——

ARNE KRAFT.

I do not like to speak of it. But I must just ask you this: what is the use of having friends?—Good-bye! [*Stretches out his hand.*]

PAUL LANGE.

[*Without taking it.*] But tell me one thing .... Have you never had this experience, that everything comes to seem so impossible, so—so loathsome—that you feel it a sort of indecency to have anything more to do with it?

ARNE KRAFT.

Never!

PAUL LANGE.

Ah, well! Your nature is different. [*Cautiously.*] So people really talk about it?

ARNE KRAFT.

Yes, those who were about you at the time. Well, I am off!

PAUL LANGE.

Thank you so much for coming! Thanks!

ARNE KRAFT.

[*Smiling.*] No, don't trouble to come out with me. I see that . . .

PAUL LANGE.

[*Heartily.*] Good-bye, then!

ARNE KRAFT.

[*Likewise.*] Good-bye! [*Goes out.*]

PAUL LANGE.

[*Alone. Takes two or three strides. Stops.*] That I should be reminded of that now! I begin to feel so anxious! [*Looks towards the door on the left.*] I wonder what fate awaits me?

[*Clasps his hands in front of him. Struggles with himself. Then goes boldly towards the door. Stops again as if to take breath. Then goes out at the back.*]

SCENE IV.

LANGE *enters from the side-room on the left with* TORA PARSBERG *on his arm. She is dressed in winter costume.*

TORA PARSBERG.

You have quite a number of hiding-places, it seems? I am really glad to be released from mine.

PAUL LANGE.

I had no idea that . . . ! There was some one here who—— You must really excuse me.

TORA PARSBERG.

You are surprised, I see, that I should come by myself.

PAUL LANGE.

I must confess I am rather taken aback. You have a courage which——

TORA PARSBERG.

——You have not?

PAUL LANGE.

Well, you mustn't put that downto the wrong side of my account with you!

TORA PARSBERG.

And pray, why not?

PAUL LANGE.

Perhaps it is only in respect to you that I lack courage.

TORA PARSBERG.

Perhaps! Well, then—to give you time to get over the shock, I will begin with a matter of business—— [*She begins to take off her cloak.*]

PAUL LANGE.

May I help you——?

TORA PARSBERG.

Thanks! [*While speaking, she divests herself of the remainder of her outdoor things.*] Old Östlie is not well. He will not be able to attend to his work on Monday. Can you lend me Kristian?

PAUL LANGE.

With the greatest pleasure!

TORA PARSBERG.

Thank you!—Well, now that I am here, you must make up your mind to talk with me!

PAUL LANGE.

Nothing could be more delightful.

TORA PARSBERG.

Shall we sit down?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Hastens to place the chairs.*] There, you see how I am——!

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Interrupting him.*] Here?

[*About to sit down.* PAUL LANGE *moves her chair a little forward, and sits down himself on the other chair at a respectful distance.*]

[*After a short pause.*] I have read your letter.—No, you need not say anything!—I will simply begin at the beginning.

PAUL LANGE.

Now that you are sitting here . . . yes, and even before . . . in fact, as soon as I had sent the letter, I could not understand how I had ever ventured to do it.

TORA PARSBERG.

Oh, I understand quite well. It did not surprise me! [*Smiles.*]

PAUL LANGE.

You have shown me so much kindness. But for that I should not, of course, have——

[*Stops.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

That's just the way with you men! When we show you kindness, you at once think it gives you a right—a right, I mean, to go a step further.

PAUL LANGE.

No, do not think that of me! Considering your exceptional position, how could I possibly dare to imagine that——

TORA PARSBERG.

But you evidently did! [*Smiles.*] By the way,

your letter was excellently written. If we could settle matters so easily, I should not have come.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Startled.*] So easily?—I am sorry to hear you say that. It cost me months of deliberation.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Smiling.*] I do not doubt it. You do not take anything very lightly, I think. But since I am getting "an elderly spinster," as they say—though not for lack of suitors——

PAUL LANGE.

No, of course not! We have all heard——

[*Stops.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

—— there must be a reason for it, I suppose. I, too, have not taken things lightly.

PAUL LANGE.

Indeed? I beg your pardon!

TORA PARSBERG.

I only mean that there is much to be cleared up—much that you have not touched upon.

PAUL LANGE.

Yes, I see! Yes, of course!

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Without allowing herself to be interrupted.*] We must get to know each other, or rather, we must make a clean breast of what we already know of each other. After your letter, we can no longer go on playing at blind man's buff.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Makes a motion with his hand.*] We have never done that!

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Without taking any notice.*] We can no longer go on telling each other only a tenth part of what we think. All social intercourse seems to depend upon that nowadays.

PAUL LANGE.

Ah, I understand.

TORA PARSBERG.

I mean that we must speak openly now. That is why I have come.

PAUL LANGE.

Since you wish it, I can have no objection. But—— [*Stops.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

It pains you?

PAUL LANGE.

No. That is to say—yes, of course, it pains me! [*He notices that she smiles.*] It pains me that you should treat it in this way. Frankly, I should prefer to have your answer without any explation! [*Rises.*] Now, of course, I can understand what it will be. I ask you for it. We are old friends, are we not? I, at least, have none better than you. I have never had any better. Your friendship is my greatest happiness.

TORA PARSBERG.

Really, I do not understand you.

PAUL LANGE.

Consider that letter unwritten! Let our friendship be as it was before you received that letter. If is possible!

TORA PARSBERG.

Be calm! Do sit down! I shall not answer you until you sit down. [LANGE *sits down.*] It's too late. Our friendship cannot now remain as it has been.

PAUL LANGE.

It cannot——?

[*Rises, but remembers that he must be seated.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

Such a letter is really like breaking into one's house.

PAUL LANGE.

What do you mean, Miss Parsberg?

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Without stopping.*] —like breaking into rooms that have hitherto been closed.

PAUL LANGE.

You must have experienced many such attempts in your life, then, Miss Parsberg.

TORA PARSBERG.

No one else has ever crossed the threshold. To all others the whole house has been closed—and has remained closed. To you, on the other hand, it has been open for many years. Yet several rooms have remained closed to you also. They can remain so no longer after your letter. The hidden things we have never told each other must now be told. Otherwise we shall never, after this, be able to speak of anything without thinking of the things we have left unspoken.

PAUL LANGE.

You are right. Unfortunately, you are right.

TORA PARSBERG.

Does the idea frighten you——?

PAUL LANGE.

Not exactly frighten. Well, yes, of course it frightens me! I know your sincerity. It is terrible. And particularly your questions. [MISS PARSBERG *smiles.*] I shrink from touching upon these matters, for reasons which you cannot know.

TORA PARSBERG.

Perhaps I do. But with regard to my sincerity, when one chooses to live, as I have lived, unmarried, alone, and yet in a conspicuous position in society, keeping an open house, with friends around me and with a certain influence over them, and with a little of what is called power . . . . then the condition, the first indispensable condition, is to be sincere. Sincere in every direction. To live so that one dares to be sincere.

PAUL LANGE.

That I have always understood.

TORA PARSBERG.

Honesty is the very breath of my life. But that atmosphere is not always of the mildest. [*Smiles.*]

PAUL LANGE.

It is not.

TORA PARSBERG.

And yet you wish to live in it?

PAUL LANGE.

With you to help me? Yes.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Smiling.*] And now to open one of the closed rooms a little: You have long cared for me, Mr. Lange?

PAUL LANGE.

I have, Miss Parsberg.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Quietly.*] Even when—when you had no right to do so?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Quietly.*] Even then.

TORA PARSBERG.

But you never said a single word.

PAUL LANGE.

I did not dare.

TORA PARSBERG.

I liked you for that. [*Silence.*] Your wife died, and even then you did not speak.

PAUL LANGE.

That I owed to her.

TORA PARSBERG.

That you owed to her! But now at last you come. You come as a Minister of State—as his Excellency. Am I to understand that you wouldnot have come unless you had attained that position?

PAUL LANGE.

Would that be unpleasant to you?

TORA PARSBERG.

You must answer me!

PAUL LANGE.

It is as you say.

TORA PARSBERG.

You think I care for titles?

PAUL LANGE.

I place you on such a pinnacle that otherwise I should not have dared—— [*Stops.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

——To propose to me! Except as Minister of State, as his Excellency! And you don't think that was to undervalue me, Mr. Lange? [*He*

looks frightened.] Had I wished to marry titles and rank, I should have been married long ago.

PAUL LANGE.

My dear Miss Parsberg, you misunderstand me.

TORA PARSBERG.

Surely you mistake your own view of these matters for mine. [*Smiles.*]

PAUL LANGE.

You forget, Miss Parsberg, what I wrote—that I am on the point of resigning both the Ministry of State and the title of his Excellency. I also told you why. You must do me the justice to remember that there are things which I place higher than being Minister of State and his Excellency.

TORA PARSBERG.

Do you think I should be sitting here if I did not?

PAUL LANGE.

No! And I thank you for those words! But allow me to say, I think it strange that you should nevertheless speak as you have just been doing. I come to you just as I am about to renounce both rank and titles. It was only when I made up my mind to do that that I sent you my—— [*Stops.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

You stop. [*Smiles.*] You dare not say the word? Proposal! It's a ridiculous word, isn't it? A proposal! [*Laughs.*] You have sent me a letter of proposal! [*Laughs.*]

PAUL LANGE.

Instead of coming in person! Unfortunately I have. Does it merely amuse you that I did not dare to—that my respect for you should make me so timid? To me, such a meeting with you, a refusal from you, perhaps a little laugh . . . . would be so terrible that I—[*silence*]—I could not. I——

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Interrupting him.*] My dear friend, now you are yourself again! I was wrong. You, too, must be allowed to be yourself! You want to hide yourself —I want to speak out.

PAUL LANGE.

May I not finish the sentence——?

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Smiling.*] You have scarcely finished a single sentence since I came!

PAUL LANGE.

That, perhaps, has not been altogether my fault.

TORA PARSBERG.

Perhaps not. And now you shall not be allowed to finish this one either. You write and ask me if I will share your life in its new freedom? Whether I will cast in my lot with yours for the sake of the reforms which you know I love?

PAUL LANGE.

That is so.

TORA PARSBERG.

Translated from your language into mine, you say to me: "I am now taking a hazardous leap away from politics—a leap into the dark. People may grow tired of this. They may forget to call me back the third time." Have you not been thinking something of this sort?

PAUL LANGE.

You are quite right.

TORA PARSBERG.

And so you said to yourself: "Now, if that kind Tora Parsberg would only join hands with me, we would take the leap together"?

PAUL LANGE.

But Miss Parsberg——? [*Jumps up.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Without stopping.*] Then perhaps the leap into the dark would not be quite so uncertain, after all. And the holiday would be much more amusing.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Remains standing.*] That is taking all the poetry out of it.

TORA PARSBERG.

Yes, the poetry that consists in vagueness. In vagueness of morals and vagueness of thought. But that poetry is neither for you nor for me. No; let us have clearness right down to the depths! That also has a poetry—a greater poetry of its own. [*Rises.*] Before everything and in spite of everything you are a politician, Mr. Lange. You reckon with reality. And you reckon rightly. [*Smiles.*] Even in regard to the Minister of State and his Excellency you reckon rightly. I greatly prize the honour you show me.

PAUL LANGE.

Miss Parsberg!

TORA PARSBERG.

I only rose to bring you down to my level again. Come, let us sit down. [*They sit down.*] And now we are good friends again, are we not?

PAUL LANGE.

Need you ask?

TORA PARSBERG.

No; we have been so, haven't we, since we were young?

PAUL LANGE.

Since we were young? Unfortunately you are very much younger than I. And you are young still, while I—— I came so late.

TORA PARSBERG.

When I was young——

PAUL LANGE.

——Quite young!

TORA PARSBERG.

When I was "quite young," no one proposed to me. Not even you.

[LANGE *becomes greatly embarrassed and is about to rise.* MISS PARSBERG *laughingly.*]

Are you going to take flight again?

[LANGE *remains sitting.*]

The fact is, that at that time I was an orphan, and I was poor. No one knew that I was ever to be rich—except one: the man who wanted to make me his heiress. And one other: myself.

PAUL LANGE.

He told you?

TORA PARSBERG.

Yes, while I was still a mere girl. But I was never to mention it. That was the condition.

PAUL LANGE.

And you kept it?

TORA PARSBERG.

Inviolably!

PAUL LANGE.

Really, that was well done.

TORA PARSBERG.

Yes, wasn't it? I think he wanted to try whether I was worthy of my good fortune.

PAUL LANGE.

Perhaps to give you something to build up a character upon.

TORA PARSBERG.

An invisible support, perhaps, against grandfather's despotism? I believe so. In any case he placed me on a lofty coign of vantage, from which many things looked quite different.

PAUL LANGE.

Naturally. This is interesting!

TORA PARSBERG.

I also watched you and your affairs, Mr. Lange!

PAUL LANGE.

Ah, my affairs—yes! They did not look very promising.

TORA PARSBERG.

You were working for a great future; you were ambitious, you wanted to know everything, to see everything. And then you got beyond your depth and greatly into debt. You were too sanguine.

PAUL LANGE.

And inexperienced. Especially inexperienced.

TORA PARSBERG.

You suffered.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Uneasily.*] Terribly! More than any one can imagine. Do not let us talk about it!

TORA PARSBERG.

Have you not got over it yet?

PAUL LANGE.

I shall never get over it, Miss Parsberg.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Leans towards him.*] Not until we have spoken openly about it, Mr. Lange.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Startled.*] About that?

TORA PARSBERG.

[*As before.*] Between ourselves, I mean.

PAUL LANGE.

Must we probe into that as well?

TORA PARSBERG.

That is my principal reason for coming here.

PAUL LANGE.

Well, madam—with all due respect—[*rises*]—you will have to discuss that matter without me. For I cannot bear it.

TORA PARSBERG.

You ought to have enough confidence in me to feel assured that I have some object in view, and that I do not do this to hurt you.

PAUL LANGE.

But it does hurt me! More than you can think —you, who have always had every comfort.

TORA PARSBERG.

Do you think so? You ought, at least, to hear me out first.

PAUL LANGE.

I cannot! You should understand why.

TORA PARSBERG.

Of course, I understand! But it is just on that account that I desire it. Come now and sit down.

PAUL LANGE.

You make that chair into an instrument of torture.

TORA PARSBERG.

Yes, to make us speak the truth! Life, you know, is based on truth.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Approaches her.*] Well,——I am not afraid of truth. [*Sits down.*] It is of you that I am afraid.

TORA PARSBERG.

You are afraid I shall discover that at the time when your position was most desperate, you pro-

posed to a very rich girl. And that she refused you. [*Smiles.*]

PAUL LANGE.

Yes! You seem determined to make me ridiculous in your eyes.

TORA PARSBERG.

I do not find it exactly ridiculous. It was a mishap—such as has befallen many. Otherwise it was a perfectly honest affair. You had made your great sacrifices; she would have to make hers. Otherwise life would have been closed to you before you could begin it.

PAUL LANGE.

That was so.

TORA PARSBERG.

The worst of it was that you again proposed and were again refused! [*Laughs.*]

PAUL LANGE.

Ah, there, you laugh, after all!

TORA PARSBERG.

At your consternation! I could not possibly help it. [*Laughs.*]

A conspiracy had been got up against you—the work of your would-be humorous friends. Our town was a small one at that time, and with nothing to interest it but gossip.

PAUL LANGE.

But that does not excuse me, perhaps. Well, now you have put it in words! I appreciate your kind intention in this. You want to help me to get over your refusal! But you need not do that, Miss Parsberg. Rather: *la mort sans phrase!* You see, such refusals have not crushed me. So you need have no fear. I don't even try to run away.

TORA PARSBERG.

My friend——!

PAUL LANGE.

Least of all should I have any difficulty in bearing a refusal from you! You stand so high in my esteem; I should think it only natural.

The mistake is, that for months I have gone about cherishing an old, fond idea, and have written a letter on the strength of it, built it up sentence by sentence, round about a great inward truth. But it does not correspond with outward reality.

I regret it deeply.

TORA PARSBERG.

But then you ought not to regret that I bring it into touch with reality.

At that time I was still in my teens. I saw in you a young man of a distinguished appearance. . . .

PAUL LANGE.

We met often.

TORA PARSBERG.

I heard of your great abilities and your lofty plans. I also heard of your embarrassments. And of the heartless ridicule you were exposed to! Do you know that at such times I quivered with indignation?

PAUL LANGE.

Is it possible?

TORA PARSBERG.

I knew—I felt—that to a sensitive nature, like yours, this was a dangerous jest, a very dangerous one! [LANGE *bows his head.*] I knew how devoted you would be to the woman who should help you —as indeed you were, when, after vanishing for a time from among us, you came back with the woman who had become your wife.

PAUL LANGE.

You were good to her!

TORA PARSBERG.

She did not know our language. At that time there were not many women here who could speak hers. One often feels the need of a confidante among total strangers.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Somewhat apprehensively.*] And you became hers.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Roguishly.*] She told me what you had told her about yourself. But you did not tell her everything?

PAUL LANGE.

Who tells everything?

TORA PARSBERG.

You do not! You are vain enough to seek to hide your imperfections. But that often means that they are all the more easily seen! [*Laughs.*] She was witty!

PAUL LANGE.

Very witty.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*In a different tone.*] But she understood you! And she cleared away all obstacles; she opened up life for you!

PAUL LANGE.

Blessed be her memory!

TORA PARSBERG.

Yes, indeed! [*Silence.*] During the twelve

years of your married life the indebtedness was on her side, Mr. Lange.

PAUL LANGE.

I was far from doing all I ought to have done. How good she was!

TORA PARSBERG.

To-day nothing must be left unsaid—not even that failing which she brought with her into your married life.

[LANGE *raises his hand.* MISS PARSBERG *proceeds without letting herself be interrupted.*]

Not even that! I wish you to understand, my friend, that I have closely followed your career. She was no longer young, and she was ailing. She spent most of her time in bed. During all that time you stood by her—grateful and faithful; you screened her; you gladdened her; you helped her. Your great devotion ennobled her; she rested as if on a throne. She was completely happy. Yes, she loved you enthusiastically! And as it is with all good natures, so it was with yours: you came to love her, to whom you had been so good.

[LANGE *dries his eyes hurriedly, so as not to be observed.*]

Every one ought then to have seen what you

really were. I do not know your equal. My admiration for you during these twelve years, Mr. Lange, has been beyond all bounds.

PAUL LANGE.

Ah, to hear you say that!

TORA PARSBERG.

Yes, now you are glad to hear it. But how could it have gladdened you, unless, first of all, I had touched upon what pained you?

PAUL LANGE.

You are right. You are so good.

TORA PARSBERG.

This has greatly influenced my life. What you are as a public man, and what you live for, I will not touch upon. It is your devotion, your goodness, and your gratitude, Mr. Lange, your gentle ways, which have raised an ideal within me, an ideal which no other man could have raised. So now, when you came to me, I could not, like you, keep at a distance. I had to come here. And when I saw how frightened you were, I could not help myself—success makes one audacious, you know! Besides, I wanted to make you feel quite sure of me. And to that end you must know that I knew everything. And therefore—here I am, Paul Lange!

PAUL LANGE.

Great God!!

[*He sinks slowly down on his knees before her.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

Why, my friend! [*Tries to raise him up.*]

PAUL LANGE.

I must do as I feel. And this is how I feel now.

TORA PARSBERG.

Let us be happy together!

PAUL LANGE.

It has come so unexpectedly. It is almost too much for me at one time. Do not be surprised. You do not know—— [*Has to stop.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

My dear, noble friend, we are not children. We have no need for fine words.

PAUL LANGE.

I try to speak as I feel. But I cannot find words! My yearning—well, I have always kept it in check. No doubt because it was too great. So that now, when I am about to — [*Becomes agitated again, but restrains himself.*] To have longed so for all this time—forgive me!

TORA PARSBERG.

You, yourself, gave out so much. Often too lavishly.

PAUL LANGE.

That was nothing. Not worth speaking about. But what I got in return was not enough. I wanted so much, much more! I had come to look upon myself as—as if I were not quite normal. I had to be careful.

TORA PARSBERG.

You are so good, Paul.

PAUL LANGE.

Paul! Ah, to hear you call me that! [*Kisses her hands.*] I feel a new fire within me—a glow in my heart that I never knew before.

[*Rises and embraces her.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Takes his head between both hands and kisses him.*] I love you!

PAUL LANGE.

To think that I——! Say it once more!

TORA PARSBERG.

I love you!

PAUL LANGE.

What music! What a new sensation! I, who came so humbly, asking only for companionship. You used the right word, for you know everything! Ah, do not laugh at me! Yes, yes, laugh as much as you like! My old dread of laughter has said its last word, its very last! Your radiant faith in me has dispelled all my diffidence.

TORA PARSBERG.

How eloquent!

PAUL LANGE.

And a few moments ago I could not even find the commonest words! It is just the same as with the burden you have lifted off my life. Simply by mentioning all that was evil in it. [MISS PARSBERG *smiles.*] I understand you, I thank you! I can now lift my head as a free man. I stand clear before you, face to face. I never could have believed I should stand thus before any one! From this time forward I set my hand to the plough where the furrow is to go, and shall look forward, only straight forward!

[*A gentle knock at the door.* LANGE *and* MISS PARSBERG *move apart.* LANGE *has some difficulty in collecting himself. Another quiet knock is heard.* MISS PARSBERG

points to the door. LANGE *goes towards it. Turns round suddenly.*]

Just once more . . . . let me press you to me again! This moment will never return!

[*They embrace and kiss. He goes towards the door, which he opens cautiously, and admits* ÖSTLIE, *who appears to feel that he comes at an inconvenient moment.* LANGE, *somewhat hastily.*]

What is it? I can see no one.

ÖSTLIE.

I beg pardon. But I did not think I ought to . . .

[*Nearer, as if he does not want to be overheard by* MISS PARSBERG.]

PAUL LANGE.

Speak aloud!

ÖSTLIE.

It is the Chamberlain, who asks me to tell you at once that he is the bearer of a letter from his Majesty, from the King himself.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*In an undertone.*] Then I will vanish. [*Going towards the room she came from.*] Oh, by-the-bye!

[*Turns round to take her cloak, etc., with her.* ÖSTLIE *hastens to help her.*]

PAUL LANGE.

No, no! Östlie, show the Chamberlain in there. Ask him to wait.

ÖSTLIE.

Yes, your Excellency! [*Goes.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

[*In an undertone.*] Mustn't I go?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Likewise.*] No!

TORA PARSBERG.

What can the King want of you? Are you not leaving the Government?

PAUL LANGE.

Yes. But the King has offered me the post of Minister in London.

TORA PARSBERG.

Is it true? Oh, accept it! We can then disappear! In the London fog!

PAUL LANGE.

Do you really ——?

TORA PARSBERG.

Yes! Think of London, the great centre of the world! And our little happiness hidden away in it. Oh, accept it!

PAUL LANGE.

You wish it ——?

TORA PARSBERG.

I cannot conceive anything more delightful! And fancy its coming at this moment! What an omen! [*Looks at* LANGE.] Has he made any condition?

PAUL LANGE.

You guess everything! To think of living for the future with one who ——!

TORA PARSBERG.

You are to defend the old man on Monday?

PAUL LANGE.

You guess that too?

TORA PARSBERG.

The situation suggests it.

[*Goes to take her things.*]

PAUL LANGE.

What do you say to it?

TORA PARSBERG.

I do not like these public humiliations. I do not believe that anything is gained by them. To the front with the new ideas! That is the chief thing.

PAUL LANGE.

"To the front with the new ideas! That is the chief thing." How often have I not said the very same thing?

TORA PARSBERG.

Then you can say it on Monday as well?

PAUL LANGE.

That's what my own nature prompts me to.

[*He helps her to put on her cloak.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

Yes, of course. Is there any one who can doubt that?

PAUL LANGE.

I have not a moment's peace.

TORA PARSBERG.

So you need some one to tell you even what your own nature prompts! [*Laughs. She is now ready to go.*] There, now!

PAUL LANGE.

How shall I ——?

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Interrupting him.*] Hush! I love you! I am the happiest being in the country!

[*They take leave. He follows her to the door, where she turns and looks round.*]

Well, good-bye, then!

PAUL LANGE.

Good-bye, good-bye!

[*He follows her out into the anteroom.*]

SCENE V.

ÖSTLIE *enters and goes quickly towards the door on the left. When about to open the door he stops.*

PAUL LANGE.

[*Enters through the door in the background.*] Well——? Why have you not opened the door?

ÖSTLIE.

[*In an undertone.*] I thought I had better call your Excellency's attention to the—the perfume there is here. It is not usual.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Smiling and happy.*] Well, what do you mean by that, Östlie?

ÖSTLIE.

That your Excellency ought perhaps to receive the Chamberlain in there.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Goes up to* ÖSTLIE, *and puts his hands on his shoulders.*] You are a good friend to us, Östlie; I will do so. [*Goes towards the door on the left.*]

ÖSTLIE.

Shall I open the window?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Turning round suddenly.*] No! No!
[*Goes into the room on the left.*]

END OF FIRST ACT

ACT SECOND

The salon on the first floor of a large country mansion, the rooms of which are lofty and decorated in the Empire style. The whole of the first floor consists of a suite of reception-rooms. The large folding-doors at the back between the salon and a broad corridor outside are open. To this corridor two staircases, one on each side, lead up from the hall below; the staircases, however, are not visible to the audience. The windows are lofty and look out upon the courtyard. Through the windows, some distance off, the roofs of some large outhouses are faintly seen. They are covered with snow, which glitters in the electric light.

The floor of the salon and the corridor is covered with a carpet of a light colour with large-patterned flowers. Doors on both sides of the salon leading into the adjoining rooms. The decorations on the ceiling represent Cupids at play among festoons of flowers. The festoons

run down by the sides of large mirrors on the walls, which are decorated in pink and gold. The furniture is in the Empire style and upholstered in light purple. In the middle of the salon a rather large oval table with chairs placed round it. Nearer to the front, on both sides, are sofas with chairs on each side, so as to form groups. On the walls sconces for electric light, which, however, are not lighted. The salon is in a dim light.

SCENE I.

The stage is empty. After a short interval the sound of silver sledge-bells is heard approaching the house, until they are heard just outside.

ÖSTLIE (*in* MISS PARSBERG'S *livery*) *followed by two other servants, also in livery, comes hurriedly from the rooms on the left. After them* MRS. HEIN, *the housekeeper, apparently greatly delighted, as if her mind had been relieved of some heavy burden.*

MRS. HEIN.

At last! Thank goodness!

[*All hurry out into the corridor, and look down the staircase on the right.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Is heard speaking and laughing at the foot of the*

staircase, then higher up.] No, really, Mrs. Hein, I am as innocent as the newly-fallen snow. Hah, hah, hah! that isn't quite right though, for the snow must bear at least half the blame.

ÖSTLIE.

[*In the corridor.*] Yes, of course, we all thought so.

MRS. HEIN.

Yes, we thought it was the snow. But we expected you this morning, Miss Parsberg.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Enters, dressed in furs, followed by* MRS. HEIN *and* ÖSTLIE. *The latter passes on and goes out on the left.*]

Who in all the world could have foreseen this? Two hours late! It will come to this, that when we travel by the Western Line we shall have to start the day before to be sure of arriving in time.

MRS. BANG.

[*In an elegant, tasteful evening toilette. A noticeable feature of her dress is a high cap with flowing streamers. She enters from the right while* MISS PARSBERG *is speaking.*]

Oh, goodness gracious, how frightened I have been about you, my child!

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Who has not seen her enter, turns suddenly round when she hears her speak. With rapture.*]

Oh, are you there, you sweet darling Auntie Denmark?

[*Embraces and kisses her before* MRS. BANG *has finished speaking.*]

MRS. BANG.

You have given us such a fright, child!

TORA PARSBERG.

How? I knew, of course, that you were here, and that it is your greatest delight to be organising parties. [*Kisses her again.*]

MRS. BANG.

I don't deny that at all! I love to think of the happy faces around you! But it is rather a serious matter if the hostess is not present to see anything of it.

TORA PARSBERG.

Well, I will go and see to it now, my dear!

MRS. BANG.

But you have no time now. The guests will be here.

TORA PARSBERG.

Oh, not yet. We may trust the Western Railway for that, Auntie! It's sure to take a rest on the other side as well! [*As she goes out on the left.*] And now to see how the table is laid!

MRS. BANG.

[*Following her.*] Yes, there are the new vases . . . I have put them . . .

[*Presently sledge-bells are heard outside; this time the sound of ordinary brass bells.*]

ÖSTLIE.

[*Returns running. He meets a servant, who comes from the corridor and calls out to him.*]

Light up, light up! [*Runs out.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Enters hurriedly, followed by* MRS. HEIN *and* MRS. BANG. *The electric light is turned on full.*]

There's some one who has not trusted to the railway, but has taken to the road. Wise man, whoever it is!

MRS. HEIN.

But, my dear Miss Parsberg, you must go down and get dressed!

MRS. BANG.

[*At the same time.*] Child, child, you must go down and get dressed.

TORA PARSBERG.

But I am completely cut off from my rooms.

MRS. HEIN.

There are the kitchen stairs!

MRS. BANG.

No, you'll be in the way there! Better take the servants' stairs! [*Points to the room on the right.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

Yes, yes! You are right! I'll go down the servants' stairs. I hope Marie has got all my things ready?

MRS. BANG.

Yes, child, yes! Make haste!

MRS. HEIN.

And I'll go back to my work!

[*Hurries off on the left.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

Well, now then!

[*Walks hurriedly towards the door on the right.*]

ÖSTLIE.

[*Enters hurriedly from the corridor on the left.*] Miss Parsberg!

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Stopping.*] What is it?

ÖSTLIE.

Mr. Storm is at the telephone.

TORA PARSBERG.

Grandfather!

MRS. BANG.

[*Horrified.*] Surely he is not coming?

ÖSTLIE.

Yes, Mr. Storm said he was coming, if there was any room left.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Looking at* MRS. BANG.] What does this mean? He said he was unwell.

ÖSTLIE.

What shall I tell him?

TORA PARSBERG.

That he is welcome, of course!

MRS. BANG.

That horrible man! He never comes except to make some disturbance! He brings with him the worst elements of the old times! Only fighting and terrorism!

TORA PARSBERG.

Has anything happened? I have not seen the papers.

MRS. BANG.

Nothing, that I knew of. But I begin to feel so alarmed, child!

TORA PARSBERG.

Oh, never mind! We shall have some fun, Auntie.

MRS. BANG.

Nice fun that'll be, I am sure! I cannot help it, but I feel as if the floor had begun to rock already.

TORA PARSBERG.

It's too early for that, Auntie. Wait till the fun begins! Good-bye for the present.

[*Goes out on the right.*]

MRS. BANG.

Why, there's some one coming upstairs already?

[*Looks at herself in one of the mirrors.*]

SCENE II.

BALKE *enters from the corridor on the left, followed by* ÖSTLIE, *who retires immediately.*

MRS. BANG.

[*Makes a stately courtesy.*] I am glad to see you, sir.

BALKE.

Good evening, madam.—You recognise me, perhaps?

MRS. BANG.

Your face—yes! But names, at my age ——?

BALKE.

My name is Balke. Member of the Storthing. I have had the honour of speaking to you at a school fête, madam! I am an inspector of schools.

MRS. BANG.

Now I remember. You are such a witty speaker, Mr. Balke.

BALKE.

Oh——! But I do not see any guests! I am not the first-comer I hope?

MRS. BANG.

Yes, you are, Mr. Balke. The others are coming by train. And the train never comes.

BALKE.

As a school official I am in the habit of being punctual. There has been such a heavy fall of snow, that I could not trust myself to the railway.

[*Bells of the same kind as the last are heard outside.*]

MRS. BANG.

There is some one else coming by road!——

Is this the first time you have been here, Mr. Balke?

BALKE.

It is the first time I have that honour. What a beautiful place! And so large!

MRS. BANG.

Yes, are they not, these old houses? In those days people did not seem to build only for their own selves. They were decidedly more sociable and hospitable. Don't you think so, Mr. Balke?

BALKE.

[*With a suppressed ironical laugh and in a falsetto voice.*] He—he—he!

MRS. BANG.

Just fancy!—we all of us live downstairs on the ground floor. Here, on the first floor, all the rooms [*pointing to both sides with both hands*] are reception-rooms *en suite*. And in the wings are the spare bedrooms.

BALKE.

[*Ironically.*] Yes, we do not build in this style now.

MRS. BANG.

It seems to me as if we do not fit into this frame any longer, Mr. Balke, with our clothes and with our ideas.

BALKE.

He—he—he!

[*Both look towards the right of the corridor. Some one is heard clearing his throat and blowing his nose.*]

MRS. BANG.

[*Approaching* BALKE. *Hurriedly.*] Tell me, Mr. Balke, has anything happened?

BALKE.

Anything happened? What do you mean?

SANNE *enters from the right, bowing to* MRS. BANG.

MRS. BANG.

[*Courtesying.*] I am glad to see you, sir.

SANNE.

Thanks! You do not know me, madam?

MRS. BANG.

Yes, I think I do. You have been some time in the Storthing, haven't you?

SANNE.

No; this is my first session. My name is Sanne.

MRS. BANG.

Oh, you are the bank director at ——

SANNE.

No; I am a farmer. Does our climate suit you, madam? Our winter is rather severe.

MRS. BANG.

But the air is so healthy and pure!

SANNE.

Ah, yes, it is.

MRS. BANG.

All who come to Norway for the sake of their health should come in the winter.

SANNE.

[*Looks pleased.*] So you like our country, madam?

MRS. BANG.

Oh, it is the most delightful country in the world! If only there were not so much politics here! I hope you will excuse me: I always say what I think.

SANNE.

[*Looking at* BALKE, *whom he has not as yet greeted.*] That is always the best way.

MRS. BANG.

[*Nearer to him. Hurriedly.*] Please tell me, Mr. . . . Mr. . . .?

SANNE.

Sanne!

MRS. BANG.

Mr. Sanne, has anything happened?

SANNE.

Anything happened? [*Looks at* BALKE.] What do you mean, madam?

MRS. BANG.

In politics, I mean. There is scarely anything else in this country.

ÖSTLIE.

[*Enters hurriedly from the right.*] Miss Parsberg asks if Mrs. Bang will be good enough to come downstairs for a moment.

MRS. BANG.

[*Eagerly.*] I will come at once. Excuse me, gentlemen.

[*Courtesies with dignity and goes out on the right, leaving the two gentlemen by themselves.*]

[BALKE *goes to the left, looks about him, and finally begins studying the ceiling.* SANNE *goes to the right and looks about him. He also finishes by studying the ceiling. Both are on the point of running up against each other, when they turn round and walk apart.*]

BALKE.

[*As they are again on the point of running against each other, without taking his eyes off the ceiling.*]

Really—these—these paintings on the ceiling are very pretty.

SANNE.

[*Also without taking his eyes off the ceiling, and after considering a while whether he shall answer.*]

They are—not bad.

BALKE.

I wonder who—who—painted them? Who could do such work in those days—up here with us?

SANNE.

Oh, they are only copies, I suppose?

BALKE.

All the same! — all the same! That foreshortening——? H'm? I say, that foreshortening?

SANNE.

Ah, yes. [*Sledge-bells are heard outside.*]

BALKE.

There's another arrival—and driving too.

SANNE.

Yes, so I hear.

BALKE.

In such rooms as these . . . . In such rooms one becomes almost . . . almost a better man. One seems to find one's better self.

SANNE.

Yes, that may sometimes be desirable.

BALKE.

Do you think so? Yes, I shouldn't at all wonder. He—he—he!

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Enters, ushered in by* ÖSTLIE, *who retires immediately.*] Good-evening, gentlemen. Good-evening! Are we the only arrivals?

BALKE.

Yes. It looks as if the railway were having a holiday!

CHAMBERLAIN.

Why not? It works hard enough all the year round.

BALKE.

He, he, he!

CHAMBERLAIN.

Well, you have had a warm day of it!

BALKE.

You mean—sittings both forenoon and after noon?

CHAMBERLAIN.

Oh, I mean a little more than that.

It is indeed a touching sight, after so hot a combat, to see two of the gladiators walking about here in peaceful communion.

BALKE.

Yes, isn't it? Isn't it, indeed? He—he—he!

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*To* SANNE.] I congratulate you on the result!

SANNE.

You must address your congratulations to Mr. Balke.

BALKE.

Oh, yes! I accept them! I accept them! He—he—he!

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Blandly.*] But—I mean both of you. I mean all of us. A change of government now—just now —would be most unfortunate, would it not?

BALKE.

That's exactly my opinion.

CHAMBERLAIN.

And then to wound the old lion——?

[*Railway whistle is heard. All are silent for a moment.*]

SANNE.

That comes in most opportunely.

CHAMBERLAIN.

You seem to appreciate such discordant sounds, although you are from the country?

[BALKE *laughs.*]

SANNE.

When they come in at the right time, then we like them, even in the country.

CHAMBERLAIN.

I am quite neutral, as you know. I have to be. But, talking of neutrality—I heard Mr. Lange's speech to-day. Was it not superb?

BALKE.

I call it a political masterpiece.

CHAMBERLAIN.

It settled the matter, didn't it?

BALKE.

There can be no two opinions about that. Besides, it was so impartial.

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*To* SANNE.] Now, frankly, don't you think so too?

SANNE.

Frankly, no!

CHAMBERLAIN.

But it speaks for itself! He does not curry favour with any one. He has resigned.

SANNE.

Paul Lange never does anything from interested motives.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Evidently you are not one of his Excellency's admirers.

SANNE.

Am I not? I admire him to such an extent that I should like to see him manager of the Western Railway. They say the post is vacant.

BALKE.

I pity a party which can never see any honesty in their opponents.

SANNE.

And I pity a party which can never win anything except by treachery.

BALKE.

Who are the traitors in this case?

SANNE.

Yes, who are they?

BALKE.

Those who abandon their old, victorious Chief! They are the traitors. Without him they were nothing. And without him they are nothing either.

SANNE.

But I should say they are bound to abandon a Chief who himself goes over to the enemy! What else can honourable men do?

CHAMBERLAIN.

Since the conversation is so well under way, I am superfluous, I am sure. You will excuse me?

[*Goes out into the corridor on the right. Stops there for a moment; then walks hurriedly towards the staircase.*]

SANNE.

[*Nearer to* BALKE.] You do not answer me? No, there is no answer. Every one who goes over to the enemy with such a Chief is a traitor also!

BALKE.

He—he—he!

SANNE.

It is no laughing matter, by heavens! This is the most ignominious day I have ever seen.

BALKE.

He—he—he!

[*A large number of gentlemen enter the room from the back; in front is the* CHAMBERLAIN *between two important-looking personages.*]

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*In the doorway.*] You do not know each other, I believe? Allow me to introduce you: the President of the Storthing,—Mr. Bang, from Denmark, landed proprietor and Master of the Royal Staghounds—a relative of our hostess. Mr. Bang has come for the annual gathering. [*The gentlemen exchange greetings,* BANG *being most obsequious.*] Allow me to conduct you to our hostess, Mr. President.

[*Both go out on the left, most of the new arrivals following them.*]

PIENE.

[*Goes hurriedly up to* BALKE.] Have you heard the news?

BALKE.

The news?

PIENE.

Yes, what the Liberal papers are saying now?

BALKE.

This evening? No.

PIENE.

[*Excitedly.*] All the papers—the whole lot of them!

ÖSTLIE.

[*Enters from the right and announces.*] Miss Parsberg will receive her guests in the inner salon —in the music-room.

[*All proceed into the room on the right.*]

BALKE.

[*On his way out.*] But what is it all about?

PIENE.

[*In an undertone.*] A regular scandal! The worst we have had yet! [*He rubs his hands while holding them out in front of him.*] Paul Lange is disgraced for ever! Finished! Done for!

[*The last sentence is spoken as they pass through the door.*]

From the corridor enter at intervals leading representatives of the bureaucracy (*the military*

in uniform), *celebrities, artists, and several young men. They enter in twos and threes.* LANGE'S *name is being mentioned among several of the groups. The following remarks are heard on different sides:* "*He never would belong to any party.*" "*No, he has betrayed all parties.*" "*Hm! Everything is put down as treachery nowadays.*" — *Or:* "*After all, he is a wonderful man.*" "*Yes, wonderful at pushing himself to the front.*"—*Or:* "*It is not he who has alone been disgraced.*" "*No, as a matter of fact they are all disgraced.*" "*That is how they ought to be photographed.*"—*Or:* "*Hang the whole lot.*" "*Yes, let them only hang one another. That's about the best they can do!*"

All depart through the door on the right.

Last of all two old venerable gentlemen coming from the corridor appear in the doorway at the same time. They bow to one another, each waiting for the other to enter first.

FIRST GENTLEMAN.

[*The younger, on the right.*] Your Reverence!

SECOND GENTLEMAN.

[*On the left.*] Your Worship!

FIRST GENTLEMAN.

Your Reverence!

SECOND GENTLEMAN.

Your Worship!

[*An elegantly dressed young man enters between them, smiling and bowing to both of them. The elderly gentlemen look up at him in surprise and then at one another; they smile and enter the room side by side.*]

MRS. BANG.

[*Enters immediately afterwards, just as the two elderly gentlemen stop in front of the next door, again bowing to one another.*]

Allow me, your Reverence, to solve this problem. [*She offers the Bishop her arm.*] Your Worship!

[*Offers the County Governor her other arm and goes into the room on the right with both of them.*]

RAMM *and* SANNE *enter from the door on the left.*

SANNE.

What is this you say?—The evening papers?

RAMM.

They publish Paul Lange's real opinion of the man he defended this morning.

SANNE.

His real opinion? Has he got two, then?

RAMM.

[*Laughingly.*] Paul Lange has always two—often more.

SANNE.

It's revolting.

RAMM.

[*Laughingly.*] H'm! In politics nothing is revolting.

SANNE.

But what has he said?

RAMM.

The Chief has, of course, been intriguing against Paul Lange as well. That you can easily understand.

SANNE.

And the papers say that?

RAMM.

Everything! From beginning to end! Nasty stories, too. They also publish what Paul Lange himself has said regarding them.

SANNE.

And that, of course, does not tally with what he said to-day?

RAMM.

No, of course, not!—It is a regular scandal.—We have, however, known all about it for some time.

SANNE.

And not said anything about it?

RAMM.

In politics truth must wait until some one finds a use for it. I have a paper here, in case you——?

[*Takes a newspaper from his pocket.*]

SANNE.

Thanks! Many thanks!

[*Takes the paper and sits down reading it eagerly.*]

BALKE *and* PIENE, *followed by another guest, enter from the right.*

BALKE.

But if this is so we have not gained any victory, after all! The moral effect will go to the devil! I should rather say we have suffered a defeat.

PIENE.

That's just the reason the scoundrels have published it all.

[RAMM *hears the conversation and laughs heartily to himself.*]

BALKE.

First of all he betrays the Liberals; and now we are betrayed just as much as they are.

PIENE.

There are some men from whom one ought never to accept help.

Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.

BALKE.

[*To* RAMM.] Ah, you laugh, I see!

RAMM.

It seems to me you are laughing as well!

[*Both laugh.*]

SANNE.

[*Jumps up in a great rage with the paper in his hand.*] Good God! has Paul Lange really had all this experience of the man's character? And still he gets up and speaks in his defence!

RAMM.

You take things so seriously, young man!

SANNE.

[*To* RAMM.] If you and the other older men

had taken this [*strikes the paper*] seriously, we should have been spared a national scandal. For that's what it is.

BALKE.

I beg you, gentlemen, to remember where we are. Don't talk so loud.

RAMM.

Well, what should we have done?

SANNE.

What should you have done?

BALKE.

Come more this way. [*To the front.*] And don't talk so loud.

SANNE.

[*Lowering his voice.*] As soon as you got to know that [*looks around him*] the old fox had begun to lay his snares for Paul Lange, because he was in his way with the King, you should have made it known. At once, I tell you!

But, 'pon my soul, there is no moral sense left in these old politicians!

BALKE.

Not so loud, my young politician!

RAMM.

Wait, sir! and you too will get tired of going around with a moral pair of bellows.

BALKE.

He—he—he!

SANNE.

I shall make no answer to that.

What is that we are face to face with here? A man who has found out, by his own experience, that the head of the Government is playing a dishonest game. He found it out long before we others. But he remains silent. Those in whom he confides also remain silent—every one of them!

But as soon as we other poor devils find out how we are governed, then we mean to make a clean sweep at once. Up with the truth, down with the Chief!

What happens next? The man who knows far better than we others comes, if you please, and teaches us in an eloquent speech that we are in the wrong! He tells us that he is just the Chief we should have! And his speech has all the more effect, as he himself is just about to leave the Government. He stands there in such a disinterested attitude! Well, I have never heard anything like it in my life!

ÖSTLIE *enters hurriedly from the corridor and goes out on the right.*

PIENE.

[*Rather loudly.*] No, by heaven, there has never been anything like it!

BALKE.

Do remember where we are.

RAMM.

Well, can't we go into the smoking-room?

SANNE.

I will speak lower.—And when the Liberal papers print the whole of the scandalous affair—that is to say, what Paul Lange has had to put up with, not on one but on many occasions, and then what he himself has said about it—and print it, just as he stands up in public and glorifies the Chief, well, then our whole people is disgraced! For it is from such double-dealing that we, as a nation, shall be judged, whether we think it just or not.

In this you, [*turning to* RAMM] you older men are his accomplices. You knew about this, and probably a great deal more! But you did not compel Paul Lange to speak out, and you yourselves were silent.

RAMM.

In politics there is a time for everything.

SANNE.

[*Excitedly.*] That is to say, that in politics nothing has any value in and for itself, but only for the ends it may serve.

BALKE.

Not so loud, please!

SANNE.

[*Lower, but impressively.*] Nice morals! Devilish nice morals!

RAMM.

Let me tell you, my young friend . . .

PIENE.

[*Forcing his way to the front.*] Let me—let me speak! This time, my worthy friend the enemy is right! For once in a way! [*Laughter.*] I can, however, throw some fresh light on the matter. I have it on the best authority. At the time when the old fox was cunningly laying his snares round Paul Lange—at that time Paul Lange himself was ill—in fact, he wasn't quite right in his mind.

[illegible].

That's quite true. There were many concurrent circumstances.

PIENE.

Financial difficulties, I have heard. His wife's will left him nothing.

RAMM.

No, nothing!

The CHAMBERLAIN, *followed by* OSSLER, *enters from the right and goes quickly out through the door at the back.*

PIENE.

Well, it is all one to me what ruined him. I don't love him! [*Laughter.*] But at that time he felt lonely and forsaken, and began to be quite despondent. And there can be no doubt that he was on the point of making an end of himself.

BALKE *and* SANNE.

What do you say?

PIENE.

I have it from one who knows.

RAMM.

Well, I never heard that.

PIENE.

But I have heard it! And now I ask, what can have induced a man whom intrigues have brought to the very point of facing death—what can have induced him to get up and eulogise the intriguer?

BALKE, SANNE, *and* RAMM.

That's just it!

PIENE.

[*Louder, encouraged by the outburst of feeling around him.*] He must have a reason for it which he alone knows.

BALKE.

Not so loud!

PIENE.

[*In a low, impressive tone.*] A reason which he alone will profit by! We others shall lose, only lose! All of us!

ALL.

[*In an undertone.*] That is so! It is perfectly true!

PIENE.

[*With great effort, but in an undertone.*] But the reason of this national scandal! Tell me, tell me the reason! And let us all, of all parties, unite against the schemer! In any case, do not let us defend him. He is a danger to us all.

SCENE III.

OLD STORM.

[*Outside in the corridor.*] It will be all right! It only takes a little time!

BALKE.

Old Storm!

PIENE.

[*Rubbing his hands.*] Now we shall have some fun, boys!

Venit lupus!

SANNE.

[*In an undertone.*] Is it that furious old man?

RAMM.

Yes! [*As* SANNE *seems curious.*] Have you never seen him?

SANNE.

No. But I look forward to seeing him. Is he not Miss Parsberg's grandfather?

RAMM.

Yes, and her father by adoption as well.

SANNE.

A man without any consideration for anybody?

RAMM.

He belongs to the days before the Vikings!

OLD STORM.

[*As he and the* CHAMBERLAIN *enter from the corridor.*] I have heard it is vacant. Is that so? You know everything.

CHAMBERLAIN.

It is vacant.

OLD STORM.

It is vacant. I thought as much. [*They are now observed by the others in the room.*] Good-evening, gentlemen! Good-evening!

RAMM, BALKE, *and* PIENE.

Good-evening! Glad to see you.

OLD STORM.

[*Coming slowly down to the front, and leaning on a big walking-stick. Surveys the people around him.*] I will stop here.

CHAMBERLAIN.

But will you not first go in and see your granddaughter?

OLD STORM.

[*Shaking hands with those around him.*] No, I will stop here. She can come to me.

[*Exchanges greetings with other guests, who all show him respect, yet appear to know him intimately.*]

[CHAMBERLAIN *goes quickly out on the right.*]

Who is that over there?

RAMM.

Sanne. Member of the Storthing.

OLD STORM.

The Radical? So that's how you look? Almost like a human being, after all.

[*Laughter.* STORM *moves towards the sofa on the left.*]

RAMM.

You are quite well, Mr. Storm?

OLD STORM.

Not at all up to the mark! But sometimes things will happen which—which put new life into one's old limbs. I shall sit down here. [*Sits down on sofa to the left, while the others begin to gather round him.*] Now, this is nice and com fortable!

PIENE.

And we are glad to see you.

OLD STORM.

I thought you would be. [*Leaning forward, in an undertone.*] Well? Isn't he a beauty?

BALKE.

Whom do you mean?

OLD STORM.

Hu—sh!

TORA PARSBERG.

[*In superb evening toilette, enters hurriedly from the right. All move aside respectfully to make room for her.*] Why, grandfather——! To venture out? When you are ill? [*He rises from his seat.*] No, no! Do not rise.

[*Takes his hand, and helps him to sit down again.*]

OLD STORM.

Of course I am ill. But I knew you would be so glad if I came.

TORA PARSBERG.

Not when you are ill, grandfather. Not when you are ill.

OLD STORM.

Why, I thought in my innocence that I was always welcome.

TORA PARSBERG.

You ought to know that from your long experience of me.

OLD STORM.

[*Lets go her hand, which he has been holding in his.*] And to-night I thought I should be especially welcome. Paul Lange is coming, I hear?

TORA PARSBERG.

Paul Lange is coming. And you like him, don't you, grandfather?

OLD STORM.

[*Looking at her.*] Not as much as you do, I am afraid! [*Restrained laughter.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

One could not expect that, for you like so many.

OLD STORM.

But none so much as Paul Lange. Yes, I confess that.

TORA PARSBERG.

Eh, what? What about Arne Kraft?

[*Laughter, less restrained.*]

OLD STORM.

[*With animation.*] That's true! I love Arne Kraft even more!

TORA PARSBERG.

Ah, do you see, grandfather? Well, I could mention others.

But now we must go.

OLD STORM.

Where to?

TORA PARSBERG.

In to the others. Tea is being served there. And soon we shall have some music. I have got a large orchestra and singers, and a choir. And I have reserved a place of honour for you.

OLD STORM.

By the side of his Excellency, I presume?

TORA PARSBERG.

There will be some one sitting between you.

OLD STORM.

I suppose that will be you?

TORA PARSBERG.

It will.

OLD STORM.

Well, no, thank you! No, I think I prefer to remain here.

TORA PARSBERG.

That's a pity! The music would soothe you so much.

OLD STORM.

Thanks. I don't need soothing a bit. I am perfectly happy.

TORA PARSBERG.

Will you not come in, gentlemen?

OLD STORM.

Thank you! But we will all stay here for a little while.

TORA PARSBERG.

And form a Committee of Public Safety?

OLD STORM.

And form a Committee of Public Safety!

TORA PARSBERG.

I hope it will not be as cruel as the first.

OLD STORM.

Unfortunately, we have not any guillotine at our disposal. Otherwise——!

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Interrupting him.*] What? No guillotine where you are, grandfather? You under-estimate yourself! [*She goes out. All laugh loudly.*]

OLD STORM.

[*Proudly.*] She has got a head on her shoulders!

BALKE.

But then she is your granddaughter!

OLD STORM.

But she has always been against me. Ever since she was a child. Always trying to do the impossible.

And now, you yourselves have heard ——?

RAMM.

[*After a short pause.*] What do you mean?

OLD STORM.

What do I mean? Why, of course, it is just about that I have come.

BALKE.

[*Cautiously.*] And that is ——?

OLD STORM.

You heard yourselves! Paul Lange!

RAMM.

That was all in fun.

OLD STORM.

Fun with a dash of the serious in it!

RAMM.

Surely he does not aim so high?

OLD STORM.

Paul Lange?

BALKE.

Miss Parsberg was only joking! All these rumours about his previous courtships ——

OLD STORM.

[*Interrupting.*] I know what I know, and that fellow knows what he is after!

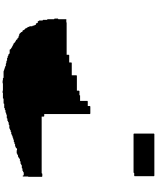
I should not be surprised if the engagement were to be made public to-night.

ALL.

[*Surprised, and at the same time.*] What do you say? It is not possible! I never heard anything like it. No, no! [*Laughter.*]

BALKE.

Miss Parsberg will never marry!



RAMM.

[*Laughingly.*] And Paul Lange will surely take care not to risk another refusal!

One can do even a knave injustice.

PIENE.

[*Interrupting them.*] But not to a professor of the art of courtship!

OLD STORM.

Just so.

PIENE.

Not to a courter! And he belongs to that type. Abroad they call them "strebers"; but "courter" is the right word. As schoolboys they court their teachers; as students their professors; then they court rich girls; then the electors; and afterwards their patrons, and decorations and high positions. And he has secured them all! [*savagely.*] And he has secured them all!

BALKE.

[*Adding quickly.*] In spite of your continual protests! He—he—he! [*General laughter.*]

OLD STORM.

[*Between the outbursts of laughter.*] Are you jealous, Piene?

PIENE.

Paul Lange has been my special study!

[*Walks away quickly.*]

THE OTHERS.

[*Laughingly.*] His special study!

OLD STORM.

Yes, you must study the man! Twice he has abandoned politics, and on both occasions he has had his guarantees before going.

ALL.

[*Laughing.*] That's true!

BALKE.

Not so loud!

RAMM.

[*In a lower tone.*] Yes, lower.

OLD STORM.

[*Also in a lower tone.*] Now he goes off for the third time. And, of course, he has again had his guarantees! Only now the risk is greater, and so the guarantees are higher.

[*All laugh again, but not so loudly.*]

BALKE.

[*During the outbursts.*] Engaged to Miss Parsberg? Well, that guarantee is good enough.

SEVERAL.

[*Laughingly.*] Yes, that is good enough.

OLD STORM.

Yes, you laugh! But with Tora Parsberg on his arm it is he who will laugh! He will laugh at you all! Come a little nearer.

BALKE.

[*Curious.*] Is there anything else?

[*Closer to him.*]

PIENE.

[*Rushing up to him.*] Is there anything else?

OLD STORM.

The best of all!

RAMM.

The devil there is!

[*All gather closely round* OLD STORM.]

OLD STORM.

[*Gets them ranged on one side of him, so that he may see if anybody is coming from the*

room on the right. As soon as he sees the course is clear, he proceeds.]

This about Tora Parsberg only explains why he risks going. But it does not explain why he ventures to make a speech just as he is going—a speech supporting the head of the Government! The very man who has treated him so badly.

PIENE.

That's it! There is a reason! There is a reason!

OLD STORM.

He must have a special reason for it!

PIENE.

That's what I say.

Virtus post nummos!

OLD STORM.

[*Looks around again.*] When I want to ferret out anything, I go to people who think themselves wiser than other people.

So I tried the Chamberlain!

[*Subdued laughter.*]

BALKE.

[*Curiously.*] Well?

OLD STORM.

The post of Minister in London is vacant.

[*General surprise. All look at one another with a pleased and meaning expression. Then there is general laughter.*]

SANNE.

[*Who has retained his composure.*] But remember where you are.

[*The laughter subsides, but gains in intensity.*]

BALKE.

[*In an undertone to* RAMM.] Isn't he a master hand?

RAMM.

A regular master hand! [*Laughter begins again.*]

[*One guest dances a few steps of a reel.*]

Two PEASANT MEMBERS *of the Storthing, attracted by the laughter, enter. One of them is an elderly man, about sixty years; the other is younger.*

PIENE.

[*Rushing up to them.*] Paul Lange is engaged to Miss Parsberg, and is going to be Minister in London! There you have it!

Fortes adjuvat fortuna!

Bah! [*Right in their faces.*]

[*The two* PEASANT MEMBERS *are greatly taken by surprise. They advance to the front.*]

THE ELDER MEMBER.

Is he mad?

SANNE.

No, but drunk—with political excitement.

[*Goes out.*]

BALKE.

He—he—he!

THE YOUNGER MEMBER.

[*Laughingly to* STORM, *whose hand he takes.*] Is it true, this about Paul Lange?

OLD STORM.

Yes, of course it is.

THE ELDER MEMBER.

[*Also greeting* STORM.] Good-evening, Storm!

OLD STORM.

Good-evening, friend.

BALKE.

Well, here we are! Both parties left paralysed behind him, and he himself goes off with all the profit. He—he—he!

I can't help saying it——it is cleverly done! I quite admire him.

THE ELDER MEMBER.

There's a clever head on that fellow.

[*The laughter commences afresh.*]

OLD STORM.

[*Rises from his seat.*] But, gentlemen, where is your indignation? We cannot possibly work up indignation out of admiration!

SEVERAL.

Oh—yes! [*General merriment.*]

RAMM.

[*During the laughter.*] Oh, the indignation will come soon enough!

BALKE.

[*In high spirits.*] It's a chemical process! Only a chemical process! [*The laughter grows louder.*]

SANNE.

Hush! Hush!

PIENE.

[*Rushing to the front.*] There he is!

[*Sudden silence.*]

OLD STORM.

[*Sitting down.*] Well, now we shall see!

SCENE IV.

The CHAMBERLAIN *and* PAUL LANGE *enter from the right of the corridor.*

PAUL LANGE.

[*In elegant evening dress.*] Good-evening.

[*Walks down towards the group.*]

[*No answer.*]

So silent all at once?

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Who remains by* LANGE'S *side.*] Have any of you gentlemen been guilty of perpetrating a joke?

OLD STORM.

Yes, unfortunately, I have!

[LANGE *goes straight up to* STORM, *and extends his hand to him.*

[STORM *takes it, and tries to get up; but has apparently some difficulty in rising from his seat.*]

I sometimes find it difficult to get up.

PAUL LANGE.

Do remain seated! Well, what was the joke?

OLD STORM.

Well, really, it was about yourself!

PAUL LANGE.

And yet it was not a success!

[*Lets go* STORM'S *hand and turns round to* RAMM, *whom he greets with familiarity, holding out his hand to him; but* RAMM *puts his hand behind his back.*

LANGE *turns deadly pale, draws himself up, and looks around. As his look passes from one to the other of the guests, they all put their hands behind their backs, except the* ELDER PEASANT MEMBER, *who remains somewhat on one side.*]

Now I understand the joke! I too think it stupid. [*He turns to the* CHAMBERLAIN.] Our hostess is in there?

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Beaming.*] Yes, your Excellency.

[*Both go out on the right.*]

[*All move about the room, talking and laughing.*]

OLD STORM.

[*Rises quickly from his seat, with the aid of his stick, and exclaims.*] 'Pon my soul, you did that capitally!

PIENE.

[*To himself, rubbing his hands in great glee.*] Bravo! bravo! It will be the death of him.

RAMM.

[*To* STORM.] That struck home, eh?

BALKE.

He won't forget that!

SANNE.

That came from all the parties!

OLD STORM.

In politics there is nothing like a well-executed conspiracy!

[*Sits down again, greatly pleased. The orchestra begins playing in the room on the right. Then a choir is heard singing with accompaniment.*]

PIENE.

[*To the front, with enthusiasm.*] I knew it, I knew it! For as I drove through the forest in the snow this evening, it was as if I heard the wolves howling—just as I heard them in my childhood up there in the mountains, especially at night. It was as if the old, outcast spirit of our ancestors cried to us in our sleep. It cried imploringly, threateningly: You sluggard, I will never give you peace! No more peace! You must arise and kill—kill!

RAMM.

Why, he is in a frenzy!

PIENE.

[*Without stopping.*] You must kill all that is weak, all that is unhealthy—all that has now taken possession of the country. You must kill the weak, effeminate sentimentality and the liberty-mongers! Kill this modern nationality swindle! Ah, you lusty, bloodthirsty, howling wolves from the woods, from the days of old! The people's watchdogs! They are always heard when danger is at hand! ——

[*He looks around him and sees only laughing faces.*]

Barbarus hic ego sum, quia non intelligor nulli!

[*Muttering to himself.*] Ovid's "Tristia," 5. 10. 37.

[*Stalks away offended. General laughter.*]

OLD STORM.

[*Strikes the floor with his stick*]. No, no, no! Those are great words that he speaks!

These others are not perfect men—they are only half men, or still less!

The perfect men are in the vanguard, they take everything by storm; they make conquests for the race. But these miserable wretches, the senti-

mentalists, they are not capable of it; they drop behind and remain with the weaklings, with the dullards, the degenerates—and with the women-folk—and fuss and dawdle about with them! They would have us join them and do the same. They would drag us backwards! Their thoughts are the thoughts of the sick-room, and their programme: When is the time of the cripples coming?

And such creatures are to meddle in politics? And lead the way for the race?

In politics, where everything ought to ring with the healthy sound of a bull's bellow!

To hell with the pack of them!

THE OTHERS.

Bravo! Bravo! [*All laugh and shout.*] He is in great form to-night, old Storm! Yes, 'pon my soul, he is good! A regular chip of a Norwegian pine-block!

SANNE.

[*In a lower tone.*] But now we are getting too noisy again.

OLD STORM.

Oh, that doesn't matter! I'll take the responsibility! Besides, they can't hear us for the music in there.

ÖSTLIE *enters from the corridor and gives* PIENE *a letter.*

PIENE.

[*Opens the letter hurriedly.*] Here are the proofs of an article for to-morrow. I asked for several copies, so that you might all read it.

[*Distributes proofs in long slips.*]

BALKE.

Here we have the howlings of the wolves—set to the music of the press! He—he—he!

[*The others laugh also and group themselves in twos and threes round each copy.* OLD STORM *sits down with a copy all to himself.*

PIENE *walks up and down behind the others, enjoying the effect, and now and then biting his nails. When he becomes over-excited, he holds one hand with the other. When he hears a laugh or a remark from one of the groups, such as "That's good," he runs behind the person reading and looks over his shoulders to see what part of the article has caused the outburst.*]

SCENE V.

The CHAMBERLAIN *enters with* MRS. BANG *on his arm.*

MRS. BANG.

My dear sir! Do tell me what this is all about! Has it anything to do with Mr. Lange? Any——scandal—eh?

CHAMBERLAIN.

When people are taken up to such an extent with anything, it always means a scandal.

MRS. BANG.

But, there's a good man, do tell me what it is! I like Mr. Lange immensely. But—they say he is such a dreadful man for proposing!

CHAMBERLAIN.

Ah, that was in his younger days.

MRS. BANG.

But now he is a bachelor again? I mean now he is free to marry again. Has that anything to do with it?

CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes, it has.

MRS. BANG.

[*Eagerly.*] Is it anything very bad?

CHAMBERLAIN.

Yes.

MRS. BANG.

What is it? Dear me, what can it?

CHAMBERLAIN.

He has proposed to the Princess!

MRS. BANG.

It can't be possible! Can such a thing be tolerated?

CHAMBERLAIN.

She is not quite young, you know.

MRS. BANG.

And he a Minister of State ——? Such things have been heard of before. But all the same ——? What do you think?

CHAMBERLAIN.

But now comes the real scandal.

MRS. BANG.

Now, do you say? Is there still more? Oh, my goodness!

CHAMBERLAIN.

Mr. Lange has said that—— [*Looks round.*]

MRS. BANG.

What?

CHAMBERLAIN.

That the King wears a wig.

MRS. BANG.

[*Taken aback. At last she says:*] But the King doesn't!

CHAMBERLAIN.

No, and that's just the scandalous part of it.

MRS. BANG.

[*In a great fright.*] Has his Majesty got to hear of it?

[CHAMBERLAIN *nods significantly. He takes her arm again as if to conduct her out to the left.* MRS. BANG *stops suddenly.*]

But how could Mr. Lange, who is such a wise man ——?

CHAMBERLAIN.

It is often the wisest who do the most stupid things. [*They walk on.*]

MRS. BANG.

Ah, how true that is: It is often the wisest who do the most stupid things. [*Stops suddenly and lets go his arm.*] How silly I am! It isn't true—of course it isn't!

CHAMBERLAIN.

No, of course not.

MRS. BANG.

What a wretch you are! You really must be punished!

[*She strikes him repeatedly with her fan.*]

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Avoiding her.*] That's how you used to amuse yourselves in the old days! Before politics came into vogue! [*Both go out on the left.*]

SCENE VI.

The various groups have now finished reading the proofs, one after the other; all are laughing and talking to one another.

BALKE.

That's patriotic enough, anyhow. He, he, he!

[*Accompanied by such exclamations as "Yes, that will have some effect!" "That serves*

him right." "*That will make a flare up!*" *from different parts of the room.*]

OLD STORM.

[*The last to finish reading his proof.*] That'll do! [*Rises.*] Well, now I will go and fetch him.

SEVERAL.

[*Astonished.*] You will fetch him?

OTHERS.

[*Also astonished.*] Out here?

OLD STORM.

Y—e—s!

RAMM.

You won't get him out here again!

OLD STORM.

[*On his way across the room.*] I'll see about that.

RAMM.

Well, how?

OLD STORM.

He cannot refuse to come and have a talk with me when I ask him. I am Tora's grandfather.

[*Hobbles away rapidly on his stick.*]

RAMM.

[*Following immediately behind him.*] But consider the consequences!

OLD STORM.

[*Going.*] Well, just so!

BALKE.

[*Hurrying after him.*] And remember where we are!

OLD STORM.

[*Still going.*] Yes, just so!

RAMM.

You won't get him to come here!

OLD STORM.

[*Stops and turns round.*] Indeed——? The man who has once got into old Storm's clutches has never yet escaped him!

[*Goes into the room on the right.*]

RAMM.

What a devil of a fellow! What will happen now?

BALKE.

There'll be a row, my friend! A regular scandal! If I were not so curious about it, I would run away!

SANNE.

[*To* PIENE.] But it isn't all true, this!
[*Pointing to the proof.*]

PIENE.

[*Passionately.*] What the devil does that matter, as long as it takes effect? [*Goes excitedly up to* BALKE.] That fool says it isn't all true!

BALKE.

[*Turning to* SANNE.] It is just where truth comes to an end that Piene begins! [*Laughter.*]

SANNE.

I quite agree that such a man must be turned out of politics. He is a danger.

PIENE.

Well, what then?

SANNE.

But not by any and every means.

PIENE.

But, confound it! once a man has made a mistake he must be wary.

SANNE.

That may be. But —— Do you wish to say anything, Haakonstad?

THE ELDER PEASANT MEMBER.

Well—about this mistake. We all make mistakes. But in politics, as soon as one makes a mistake, they pitch upon it and run to the end of the world with it—and even a bit farther. [*All smile.*] He has never made any mistake but this one; and no one else has ever made a mistake but he.

All this seems to me to be a little too much of a good thing. [*All laugh.*]

PIENE.

[*With an air of superiority.*] Mr. Haakonstad does not understand that everything depends upon gaining a victory at the right moment. We must not let that moment be lost! And in such a case all means can be justified.

SANNE.

That may be hard upon the individual.

PIENE.

The individual? Who the devil is the individual, however great he is, if he is in the way?

BALKE.

[*Surprised.*] Why, I really believe he has got him with him!

[*The guests make way for* OLD STORM *and* LANGE, *who enter from the right.* PIENE *goes behind the others.*]

SCENE VII.

OLD STORM.

[*To* LANGE, *who stops just inside the door.*] Your Excellency will understand that I have stronger reasons than the others. Your Excellency will guess what I mean.

PAUL LANGE.

I believe I understand what you refer to.

OLD STORM.

I have therefore a certain right to ask your Excellency for an explanation. What you have done to-day creates bad blood.

PAUL LANGE.

Another time—and in another place.

[*About to go.*]

OLD STORM.

But your Excellency cannot stand thus in public opinion, just as your Excellency intends entering into —— I need not say more.

PAUL LANGE.

Well, what do you want me to do?

OLD STORM.

Put a stop to the scandal! Here—now!

PAUL LANGE.

Before the men who have insulted me? No.
[*Again about to go.*]

OLD STORM.

Remember, they believe you have betrayed them!

PAUL LANGE.

[*Turns round.*] I have betrayed no one—absolutely no one. I have only expressed my honest opinion about an old and highly deserving man.

OLD STORM.

Has your Excellency read the evening papers?

PAUL LANGE.

I have read them. And what they say has nothing to do with this matter.

SANNE.

[*Coming down to the front. Excitedly.*] Has it nothing to do with the matter that your Excellency should recommend an untrustworthy man as the head of the Government?

OLD STORM.

Whom you know to be so from experience?

SANNE.

Of whom you said to-day, that in spite of everything, he was the man who could best unite the nation?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Takes a couple of steps to the front.*] And I say so still.

SANNE.

[*Coming to the front.*] What sort of a nation must we then be?

SEVERAL.

Yes, what sort of a nation must we then be?

PAUL LANGE.

The people know only his great deeds. And does any one really believe that the amount of love and admiration he has won is now exhausted? If it is not, then I am right. "In spite of all, he is still the man who can best unite the nation."

RAMM.

The future will show that it is not so. The people follow everything too closely! But even, if it were the case—there is one man, who cannot

use that argument, or any other argument, in support of this man at the head of the Government—and that man is your Excellency!

PAUL LANGE.

Indeed?—Several of you, and, amongst them, you who have just spoken, knew his faults as well, but you were silent. You kept silent and supported him—as long as you agreed with him!

RAMM.

But then we were in opposition along with him. There these faults of his did not do much harm. But at the head of the Government—that's another matter!

SEVERAL.

[*Eagerly.*] Quite so!

PAUL LANGE.

Politics do not breed angels. Men with greater faults than his have led great nations, and their names have become the greatest in history.

SANNE.

But we are a small nation. The morals of conquest are not for us. Martial law is not for us. We can do nothing by force.

If we are to win respect, it must be by that example which a healthy nation sets.

ALL.

Quite right! Just so!

PAUL LANGE.

The persecution of the individual is not a sign of a healthy nation.

RAMM.

In politics it is a question of one thing at a time. Now it is this one.

PAUL LANGE.

Every one to his own nature, and the profession of the executioner is not in my line.

OLD STORM.

[*Who has sat down, this time on the sofa to the right. To himself.*] He answers well. But, as I live, he shall be crushed! [*Aloud.*] Why did not your Excellency resign at the time when you were so badly treated by him?

PAUL LANGE.

You ought rather to have thanked me for remaining, so that the first Liberal Government which the country has had could proceed with its work in peace. That is why I was silent.

OLD STORM.

But now, when you find it convenient to go, why did you not keep silent to-day as well?

SEVERAL.

[*Nearer to him.*] Yes, why did you not keep silent to-day as well?

RAMM.

Or, if you did want to speak, why did you not say the same as we did? You had had the same experience of him, only yours was still worse.

PAUL LANGE.

I have already given you my answer to that. And now I think we have had enough of this.

[*Going.*]

The PRESIDENT *of the Storthing and several gentlemen enter from the right.*

OLD STORM.

[*Rises and turns towards* LANGE.] Your Excellency must excuse me; but some think that you had another motive! [*Nearer to* LANGE.] That you had a special motive for supporting the Chief to-day.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Turns upon him.*] What do you mean by that?

OLD STORM.

[*Sharply.*] That you know best yourself!

PAUL LANGE.

[*Turns deadly pale. Stands motionless for a moment.*] It is an infamous calumny! [*Going.*]

SCENE VIII.

ARNE KRAFT *is observed in the corridor.*

SANNE.

[*Who is the first to see him. Greatly pleased.*] There is Arne Kraft!

SEVERAL.

Arne Kraft! [*All turn round.*]

RAMM.

[*In an undertone to* BALKE.] He knows all about it.

BALKE.

[*Likewise to* RAMM.] And he will speak out, you'll see!

PAUL LANGE.

[*Towards* KRAFT.] It is fortunate you have come! You do not agree with what I have said

to-day. But you know my reasons for it. Tell them now—here! You alone can do it.

[KRAFT *looks at him, but says nothing. Several of the guests go up to* KRAFT *and greet him.*]

ARNE KRAFT.

[*To* SANNE, *who is nearest to him.*] What is the matter?

SANNE.

You have read the evening papers, of course?

ARNE KRAFT.

I have read "The Daily Post."

SEVERAL.

Yes, yes!

SANNE.

Then you can easily guess what is the matter here.

RAMM.

Perhaps you have some information to give us?

[*The* PRESIDENT *of the Storthing is seen whispering to* ARNE KRAFT.]

ARNE KRAFT.

[*Looks round at the guests, especially at* LANGE. *He speaks with much agitation.*]

Yes, I have something to add to what "The Daily Post" says.

[*More and more guests crowd into the room from the one on the right.*]

I can well understand that wherever our countrymen now come together they cannot speak of anything else.

Paul Lange is one of the best men we have. One of those who have seen farthest ahead and have done most. High-minded, like no other, wise and considerate! Outside parties, but often in the vanguard when anything was at stake. We have much to thank him for. The persecutions to which he has been exposed have only made him all the dearer to us. We expected great things of him, such as we have expected of only one other.

THE ELDER PEASANT MEMBER.

That is true!

SANNE.

It is, indeed!

PIENE.

[*Approaches* STORM *quietly. In a whisper.*] This looks bad!

OLD STORM.

Bah!

ARNE KRAFT.

But then comes what has taken place to-day.

If any one had told me yesterday, or even this forenoon, that this would happen, I should have staked my life that it was impossible. It is the most unexpected blow I have ever received. I still feel it so much that I cannot find words for it.

He cannot understand what he has done—that each one of us feels as if we had suffered a defeat through him, both those who have won and those who have lost.

SEVERAL.

Yes, that's so!

ARNE KRAFT.

We feel as if he had betrayed us all, as if we had suffered a national disaster. But none have felt it more deeply than I—for we have been friends from our youth. [*Silence.*]

RAMM.

You said you had something to tell us?

ARNE KRAFT.

Yes. Three days ago I went to see Paul Lange. Notice had just been given of the vote of want of confidence.

I went to remind Paul Lange that he could not possibly support the Chief—he least of all.

SEVERAL.

[*Muttering after him.*] He least of all.

ARNE KRAFT.

We had a long talk on the subject. The result was: we agreed that without integrity no national happiness is possible——

SEVERAL.

[*Subdued.*] True! Quite true!

ARNE KRAFT.

—— and that, consequently, the State could not be led by a man who was not absolutely trustworthy.

SEVERAL.

[*As before.*] That's it! Just what we have said.

ARNE KRAFT.

[*Looking at* LANGE.] Well, then! [*Slowly and impressively.*] All this Paul Lange admitted to me. I asked no more of him—only that he should keep away to-day. And that he promised me. [*Subdued murmurs.*]

I have just heard from the President of the Storthing that he had promised him the same.

[*Increased murmurs.*]

SANNE.

But this is quite unheard-of!

PAUL LANGE.

[*Calmly.*] I scarcely think so. We all know that a man, under great pressure, may promise things which he afterwards feels it is not fitting for him to fulfil.

PIENE.

[*From behind the others.*] "Not fitting"!

ARNE KRAFT.

I will not say anything as regards that. But what "The Daily Post" says is true—that I can vouch for. I have proofs of it.

SEVERAL.

[*Subdued.*] He has proofs of it!

SANN, RAMM, *and* BALKE.

You have proofs of it?

ARNE KRAFT.

Yes, the most positive proofs.

PIENE.

[*During the general, almost solemn, silence that ensues, he forces his way through the other guests to the front and shouts:*]

That man is impossible!

[*He seems frightened at his own words, and rushes to the back of the stage again. Laughter.*]

PAUL LANGE.

Yes, I can see that the object of all this is to make me so.

ARNE KRAFT.

The object is to make our politics honest and upright. To secure an honest assembly of honourable men—if that be possible. That is the object.

In this you, my old friend, have aided us—greatly and nobly.

Whatever may be the cause of our now being obliged to disavow you in order to reach our goal, you alone know. I do not.

For us you have destroyed everything that it was possible to destroy just at present. We shall drift back for years in consequence. At one time it was doubtful; now it is certain. It will cause great sorrow to all the best people in the land. You will never win their confidence again. I am grieved to the heart. But there is no help for it now.

[*General subdued murmuring, during which such expressions as: "That's well said," "This'll take effect," are heard.*]

PAUL LANGE.

[*Goes up to* KRAFT.] Now you have killed me! I did not think you would be the one to do it.

[*He covers his face with both hands, while his body trembles.*

ARNE KRAFT *takes a step backwards as if a new light had burst in upon him.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Who has been fetched by her aunt and who has been standing for some little time unobserved, comes now to the front, followed by* MRS. BANG.]

Excuse me, gentlemen, but you are violating my hospitality!

OLD STORM.

My girl, we only want to ——

TORA PARSBERG.

[*With a deprecating gesture.*] The man in whose memory we are gathered here to-night was also a politician. But he often said: I do not understand politics! They were intended as a means of developing the highest form of humanity, but they have been made the most hateful means of persecution. Their end was to give the community courage and health, but in the process they poison many minds.

OLD STORM.

But really, when——

TORA PARSBERG.

Pardon me, grandfather—a festal gathering should be neutral ground. Good fairies surround it and keep watch over it, and I am here as their deputy. Would I could say now, as the great King of Fairyland did, when he sent out invitations to his feast:

"Welcome hither from the perverted world, you poor, suffering children of men! You, who were not cunning enough among the wolves, not wicked enough for the tyranny of party, not virtuous enough for the Pharisees, or not untruthful enough for the traffic of the world.

"You warm and good hearts, who could not find your way because your wings were wounded. You, who, for lack of wisdom, have limped about from hiding-place to hiding-place,—for lack of courage, for lack of love!

"Here you shall be among the first—you, the martyrs of mankind!"

We are holding a feast to-night! Only free and noble souls can make festival.

And as I am the one in power here, I will, at least, do this:—I will choose as my escort to the festive board the man who amidst all the errors of our time seems to me to be the most blameless.

[*The orchestra in the room on the left begins playing a march.* MISS PARSBERG *turns to* LANGE.]

Your Excellency, will you do me the honour of conducting me to table?

PAUL LANGE.

Sometimes a divinity descends to earth!

TORA PARSBERG.

[*To the* PRESIDENT *of the Storthing.*] Sir, will you take my aunt? [*To her grandfather, as she passes him.*] You know, I always have loved the impossible.

[*Goes out on* LANGE'S *arm on the left to the dining-room. All the guests follow in couples.* ARNE KRAFT *goes out at the back unnoticed.*]

PIENE.

[*Coming down to the front.*] *Stulti, stolidi, fungi, bardi, blenni, buccones!* [*Mumbling to himself.*] *Plautus, Bacchides.* [*Rushes out at the back.*]

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*To* OLD STORM.] May I have the honour of taking you in?

OLD STORM.

[*Who has risen and is also beginning to go towards the door at the back.*]

No.

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*After him.*] Are you not going to have something to eat?

OLD STORM.

No.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Shall I tell them to get your horse and sledge ready?

OLD STORM.

I will see to that myself.

[*When he notices that the* CHAMBERLAIN *is still following him he stops and looks hard at him.*]

Go to the devil! [*Goes out at the back.*]

CHAMBERLAIN.

Then I must follow you, sir.

END OF ACT SECOND

ACT THIRD

The Drawing-room at the hotel, as in the First Act. The fire is burning in the stove.

SCENE I.

The door at the back is opened, but no one enters.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Shortly afterwards, outside in the corridor.*] Put my things away, so that no one can see them.

ÖSTLIE.

[*Outside in the corridor.*] Yes, madam.

[MISS PARSBERG, *in an elegant travelling dress, advances into the room, and looks round about, but does not speak.*]

[*Enters shortly afterwards.*] Do you find it warm here, madam?

TORA PARSBERG.

It is too warm.

ÖSTLIE.

I could not make it warm enough here for his Excellency to-day. I will open the door to the——

[*Goes to the door on the left and opens it. Returns to the middle of the room.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

How strange you look, Kristian!

ÖSTLIE.

[*Stops.*] What do you mean, madam?

TORA PARSBERG.

You are as pale as death! [*Alarmed.*] Has anything happened?

ÖSTLIE.

I have been up all night, madam.

TORA PARSBERG.

Why? You must have got home early from my place! By one o'clock, I should say.

ÖSTLIE.

Yes, about that time.

TORA PARSBERG.

Mr. Lange had also got back then, I suppose?

ÖSTLIE.

His Excellency had also got back.

TORA PARSBERG.

Has not he slept either?

ÖSTLIE.

He did not close an eye. [*Short pause.*] And therefore I could not.

[MISS PARSBERG *remains silent.* ÖSTLIE *waits for a few moments, then turns to go.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

Kristian!

ÖSTLIE.

[*Stopping.*] Yes, madam?

TORA PARSBERG.

I have not slept either. For when he left without saying good-bye I felt that something must be wrong.

ÖSTLIE.

He is now just as he was that other time, when he was ill. That time the intrigues against him . . . well, you know?

TORA PARSBERG.

I know, I know! I have been thinking of it all night. [*To herself.*] How terrible! What did he do?

ÖSTLIE.

He kept walking up and down here. And then he began writing.

TORA PARSBERG.

How could you see that?

ÖSTLIE.

From there. [*Points over his shoulder to the door at the back.*] And then I came in twice to look after the fire.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*After a pause.*] Did he say anything then?

ÖSTLIE.

He said, "Are you not in bed yet, Östlie?" Nothing else.

TORA PARSBERG.

Did he read the morning papers?

ÖSTLIE.

All of them.

TORA PARSBERG.

That couldn't be prevented?

ÖSTLIE.

That couldn't be prevented.

TORA PARSBERG.

You did not let him go out alone, I suppose, Kristian?

ÖSTLIE.

No; the secretary came and fetched him. By that time his Excellency had had his bath and drunk his coffee.

[MISS PARSBERG *says nothing. Walks up and down. Stops, as if meditating.* ÖSTLIE *comes nearer.* MISS PARSBERG *looks at him.*]

I was going out and in at your place last night and heard what was going on. Of course, I am only a servant; but, thought I to myself, it is not easy to judge a man like him.

[MISS PARSBERG *remains standing without answering.*]

He has often been so melancholy of late.

[MISS PARSBERG *says nothing.*]

There he is! [*Nearer to her, and in a beseeching tone. Hurriedly.*] Miss Parsberg!

[*She looks at him.*]

No one else can——!

TORA PARSBERG.

If I only could——!

[*Dries her eyes hurriedly.*]

[ÖSTLIE *goes towards the door, which opens at the same moment.* MISS PARSBERG *retires into the room on the left.*]

SCENE II.

LANGE *enters with his overcoat on. He wears a determined expression, goes straight to the writing-table, takes a case out of his pocket and puts it in the drawer, locks it, and takes out the key.*

ÖSTLIE *makes a gesture of alarm to* MISS PARSBERG.

LANGE *lets* ÖSTLIE *help him off with his coat.*

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Enters and is at once seen by* LANGE.] Yes, it is I! [*Nearer.*] You are not glad to see me?

PAUL LANGE.

Can you ask? I am, of course, very much surprised at seeing you out so early. And in such cold weather. I feel very cold, although I have had a brisk walk. We must have some more fire.

[*Rings.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

Yes, it is cold here.

PAUL LANGE.

[*To* ÖSTLIE, *who enters.*] Let us have some more fire on, Östlie. It is really very cold here.

TORA PARSBERG.

And in there also? Or would you rather have that door shut?

PAUL LANGE.

That door must be shut.

[*He goes himself and shuts it.* ÖSTLIE *has in the meantime put more wood on the fire.*]

[*To* ÖSTLIE.] Oh, let me have a little brandy—[*turning to* MISS PARSBERG] if you will permit me, Miss Parsberg?

TORA PARSBERG.

Why, of course. [ÖSTLIE *goes.*] You actually went away last night without saying good-bye!

PAUL LANGE.

[*After a short pause.*] I could not.

TORA PARSBERG.

That is why I have come.

PAUL LANGE.

Which I highly appreciate. But I should, of course, have come to you.

[ÖSTLIE *enters with decanter and glass.*]

Thanks!—I will pour it out myself. Excuse me, Miss Parsberg.

[ÖSTLIE *goes out with his eyes fixed on* MISS PARSBERG.]

[LANGE *fills a glass and drinks. Remains standing for a little.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

That does you good, doesn't it?

PAUL LANGE.

Yes, but I am not used to it.

TORA PARSBERG.

But you feel well, don't you? You look very well.

PAUL LANGE.

Do I?

TORA PARSBERG.

Very well indeed. You are a strong man!

PAUL LANGE.

I think so myself. If only I were left in peace.

TORA PARSBERG.

From such stupid conspiracies, you mean?

PAUL LANGE.

"Conspiracies"? Yes, that's the word!

TORA PARSBERG.

I have no power over the wicked old man. But you are not likely to let that sort of thing deceive you.

PAUL LANGE.

Have you seen to-day's papers?

TORA PARSBERG.

Yes, of course.

PAUL LANGE.

The telegrams from Stockholm?

TORA PARSBERG.

Sent according to orders from here! I have read it all.

Poor people! They have to keep at it all night as well.

PAUL LANGE.

I should like to see the telegrams which are sent out over the world to-day.

TORA PARSBERG.

And are forgotten to-morrow. But I have come about something which is more important.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Interested.*] You have? and that is ——?

TORA PARSBERG.

Come, let us sit down.

PAUL LANGE.

[*In consternation.*] Excuse me for not having——!

[*They sit down.* LANGE *nearest to the table.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

So you did not wish our engagement to be made public last night?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Uneasily.*] I could not.

TORA PARSBERG.

Well, well! we need not announce it at all!

[*She pauses, but he makes no reply.*]

It can be done in a different way altogether. I have come to propose it to you. But you must listen to me.

PAUL LANGE.

I am listening

TORA PARSBERG.

You do not even look at me.

PAUL LANGE.

I seem to hear other voices as well.

TORA PARSBERG.

Didn't you sleep well last night?

PAUL LANGE.

Yes, thanks! Fairly well. What was it you were about to say?

TORA PARSBERG.

That we should go abroad together, and that we should start—well, let us say to-day—in a couple of hours.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Uneasily.*] In a couple of hours? But we cannot travel together without first getting——?

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Smiles*]——married? We can do that, say, in Copenhagen, or at some other place on the way.

I have no preparations to make. Nor have you, I should think. I have got my papers with me.

PAUL LANGE.

I understand, of course, what you offer me. I am deeply grateful to you. And if nothing had come in the way, then——

TORA PARSBERG.

What has come in the way?

[LANGE *looks at her, but does not reply.*]

Yesterday you would have accepted such a proposal.

PAUL LANGE.

There are a hundred years between yesterday and to-day.

TORA PARSBERG.

Is not that rather much? I suggest there are only a few hours. And during those hours we two have become stronger in the art of standing by one another.

PAUL LANGE.

That is a great art! Perhaps the greatest of all.—After all, it is the one I have neglected—that of standing along with others. Nowadays one must take a side and strike a blow for the party.

Otherwise one has no friends. I have only enemies.

TORA PARSBERG.

I thought you had a friend in me?

PAUL LANGE.

My dear, excuse me! My thoughts were wandering. What was it you wanted to say to me?

TORA PARSBERG.

It is of little use my saying it until you have told me what there is on your mind. There is something——?

PAUL LANGE.

Yes, there is ——. A question. May I ask you a question? Only a single one!

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Gaily.*] If it is not too profound!

PAUL LANGE.

[*Without noticing her answer.*] I am almost ashamed to ask it. But to you I can say everything!

TORA PARSBERG.

Everything.

PAUL LANGE.

Am I a blackguard?

TORA PARSBERG.

Are you——? [*Laughs.*]

PAUL LANGE.

[*Without noticing it.*] Why do they always treat me as if I were a—a blackguard?

TORA PARSBERG.

You ask that?

PAUL LANGE.

Is it not strange that they should fix upon me? They do not treat any one else like that.

TORA PARSBERG.

Now you make too much of yourself. That is not usually one of your faults.

PAUL LANGE.

By heaven! I did not think there was anything of the blackguard about me.

TORA PARSBERG.

No: in that case you would not be troubled by them! For it is not one's compeers one hates—[*gaily*]—that's to say, generally speaking.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Without noticing her remarks.*] Always these old stories of my youth over and over again—of the time of my despair. Have I, then, done nothing else?

TORA PARSBERG.

It's only their music, my friend!—only music! They have many such pieces always at hand. They put them into their hurdy-gurdy as they are wanted. You know that!

PAUL LANGE.

Yes, that is so. Of course, I know that.

But they must take it for granted that this is what people think of me. This is the reputation I have earned. Otherwise they would not resort to these tactics.

TORA PARSBERG.

They pretend to believe it! Many are taken in by it.

PAUL LANGE.

There, you see! Many are taken in by it.

TORA PARSBERG.

But we must not be!

PAUL LANGE.

No. Of course not.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*With mock solemnity.*] Forgive me, Paul Lange: but is this really your question?

PAUL LANGE.

Yes, forgive me!

[*Takes her hand and kisses it.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

Must I let myself be satisfied with that?

[*They both rise suddenly, embrace and kiss each other.* LANGE *tears himself loose and bursts into tears. Goes towards the back.* MISS PARSBERG *follows him and throws her arms around him.*]

What is it, my friend? Speak out! Tell me!

PAUL LANGE.

If I only could!

TORA PARSBERG.

Still shy! Still reticent! I thought you could now depend upon me?

PAUL LANGE.

You will not be able to understand it—not even

you. It has been too much for me! So many years of secret suffering! And weakness! And cowardice! [*Bursts out.*] There is not a spot upon me that has not its wound!—If all these open sores could only speak out! Good God! who could endure it? And how ugly it all is! I do not seem to have known it until last night. But, as you see, now I confess it openly! I have got to the point when dissimulation is no longer necessary. So it is not on that account that I keep silent.

No, do not ask me! It pains me!

TORA PARSBERG.

My God, how unhappy you are!

PAUL LANGE.

I am not happy, no.

TORA PARSBERG.

My good, noble friend, what can—who can have got the better of you thus? In your own mind, I mean? In your own mind! For in the eyes of other men you are not vanquished! They fight like madmen against you! There are no weapons in existence which they will not resort to. So strong do they think you.

PAUL LANGE.

You are right. It is quite true.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Firmly.*] But why then surrender in your inner self?—And so suddenly!

PAUL LANGE.

Not suddenly! And not for any one cause. No, it is the sense of this daily, this endless malignity——! Only last night did it come to a head.

TORA PARSBERG.

Why not before?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Looking at her.*] That I will not say. [*Going.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

[*After him.*] You must say it! We must talk about it! If that only could help you, Paul!

PAUL LANGE.

I cannot! I will not!——
No, don't ask me!

TORA PARSBERG.

Then I will speak!

PAUL LANGE.

[*Turns round and puts his hands up against her.*]
No, no!

[Rushes up to her, puts his arms round her and leans his head on her shoulders.]

TORA PARSBERG.

[Struggling against her own emotions.] — — — — — — — — — — —

Are we not to discuss the matter I came about?

PAUL LANGE.

Yes, let us sit down. *[They sit down.]*

TORA PARSBERG.

What do you say to our going away? This very day? At once? We will take Kristian with us, and we shall have no further cares.

Away from all this—you understand! Into an atmosphere which is altogether free from these poisonous germs. What do you say to it?

PAUL LANGE.

That it must be an illusion. Our thoughts are born of our past. And they will follow us.

TORA PARSBERG.

May I remind you—that I too will follow you.

PAUL LANGE.

God bless you! But it is just that—no, don't

make me speak of it. It would be too much for me. I tell you so beforehand.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Entreatingly and much moved.*] Don't you feel how you are now humiliating me?—wounding me?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Aghast.*] I?—You?

TORA PARSBERG.

As long as it was a question of sharing honour and work, you would have taken me with you. But you do not think me capable of standing by you in danger—in sorrow. Then, you even deny me your confidence.

PAUL LANGE.

No, no, do not put it in that way! For Heaven's sake, do not put it in that way. But—"to take you with me," as you say? Why, we are not married. I could not justify it.

TORA PARSBERG.

Are we not married? I consider we are. Ceremonies are nothing to me—they are only to satisfy the law. Are they anything more to you?

PAUL LANGE.

No.—But I cannot overlook the fact that as we stand now we can still choose.

TORA PARSBERG.

Not I. I have no choice! To a compact two are necessary. But sometimes two are also necessary to undo it. And so it is in this case.

PAUL LANGE.

[*In alarm.*] You will not undo it?

TORA PARSBERG.

Not as long as life is left in me.

[*Rises from her seat.*]

PAUL LANGE.

[*Remains seated, as if paralysed. At last in a whisper.*] Well, then——!

TORA PARSBERG.

Would you really have me otherwise?

PAUL LANGE.

No.—But how then would you have me?

TORA PARSBERG.

Just like me!

That might do if the conditions were the same, or if I were in your place. [*Rises.*] But now I am overthrown—sunk into the worst disgrace which the arts of calumny can bring about. I lie in the mud of the street; they kick, they spit at me. And then you would have me say to a woman who stands so high and free as you, as no other in the land:

"Bend down over me a little, so that I may hide myself in your lustre!" Or you would have me ask you to lift me up and fly away with me, over their heads, to foreign lands—where we should hear and see no more of them?

Then I should be utterly ruined. I am not that as yet.

No, let me speak out! Suppose that I can yet raise myself by my own strength. I think I can—that is to say, if I only will. For there are things one has no longer any will for. But suppose I will—and can . . . ought I then, with this pack of hounds at my heels, first of all to seek you out, and ask you to cast in your lot with mine? While you are still free and have your own choice?—Well, there is no question here of how you may look at it! The question is how *I* look at it. And in my eyes it is the worst thing I could do.

You said just now that I should not humiliate you. No, Heaven preserve me from that! But you must not humiliate me either.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Overcome.*] Oh, my God!

PAUL LANGE.

Yes, I knew how difficult it would be for you—only to understand me! You, who from your earliest youth have been in such a position as to live in fearless sincerity. Can you imagine what one who has been cowed, cowed in his earliest youth, has had to go through? How it has entered into the very conditions of his life, I mean of his honour and abilities? For that was my case.

Do you know that then one's work has no longer any object in it? Something else has arisen, with which it must compete—which it must vanquish—vanquish every day. And then comes the question of obtaining peace for one's work. It does not come any longer of itself. It has to be bought—always bought afresh. Bought through the most wearisome consideration for others, through unremitting obsequiousness, for fear has entered into everything. Life is therefore transformed into an outside existence—on the doorstep. Not inside one's own rooms. We dare not let any one inside. We do not live our own life any longer, we do not speak our own words. In part, perhaps, but never entirely—never, never entirely! Oh, my God!

Never entirely. Not until that day you came here! Then a man arose up within me, who

threw away everything that was torturing him. He rose up to his full height and assumed command, and that man was I—myself. He said what he had at heart without any consideration of the consequences. For the first time he said what his nature dictated to him, dauntlessly, confident of victory! For he wore your colours on his breast.

And that was my fall.

TORA PARSBERG.

No, no!

PAUL LANGE.

It was my fall! Not through the ambush I was allured into. No, it was ordained beforehand; it was fulfilled of itself. It all became quite clear to me last night.

It does not do to dam up everything for fifteen years, and then all at once let yourself loose; nor will it do for a poor creature like me to aspire to the highest of places. It makes the fall so terrible!

TORA PARSBERG.

[*In despair.*] You wound yourself with your own words! Each one goes deeper and deeper! You are wounding yourself to death! I cannot bear it!

PAUL LANGE.

To me it is a need. It is the longing for light

in one who has been too weak to bear it. . . . A healthy, cold cure is necessary. It began last night. And it is going on now.

Now listen! One who has been cowed so early . . .

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Overcome.*] But I cannot! And I will not!

PAUL LANGE.

I told you it would be too much for you. But this is a fight. Whatever the result may be, it must be fought honestly. Now you must listen. I beg you!

One who has been early cowed has a peculiar, magnetic, tremulous sense of what shame is.

Last night at your house . . . . . it came upon me like a volley from an ambush . . . . . I stood surrounded and betrayed; my defence was met with scorn, as if it were not that of an honest man! And among them was Arne Kraft. Yes, Arne Kraft! That was the worst of all! Then I knew at once: this is the end! You can get no further! From that sunny peak on which I stood, all at once to gaze down into this abyss, with the storm raging all around!

You stepped in; you only did this—[*stretches out his open arms*]—and there was no abyss any longer, there was no storm! Not a cloud to show that there had been any.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Entreatingly and nearer to him.*] This power I shall have at all times—in all places. You are not yourself now; otherwise you would not doubt it.

PAUL LANGE.

[*In despair. Entreatingly.*] You must listen! It is just that: what you can do and what you cannot do—that is what I want you to understand.

You came and took me with you in to the music—into the flood of light and the hum of the company. Then, like you, I believed that we were advancing towards the future. I am an incorrigible illusionist. I thought myself saved—this time also. I sat down by your side, and you gave me a flower. Here it is! [*Kisses it.*] In my thoughts I made with you the very journey that you to-day come and propose to me. Away from here! Then in our absence they should learn to know me as I am—learn to thank me for my defence of the old man, for whom I wished to secure peace in the evening of his days. Their calumnies should cease. Yes, I dreamt it all! The lights and the music deceived me, and you sat by my side. You gave me all this!

But no sooner did you whisper to me—"Shall we not announce our engagement?"—than—than all became dark, silent! A feeling of dread swept through the room, the music was stopped, the

lights were turned out, and something whispered: Be silent! Only one thing was left—the eyes! Wherever I looked I saw eyes, eyes—envious, mocking, exulting eyes! Wild beasts' eyes, cats' eyes, snakes' eyes, all staring cruelly, greedily at us two! They were all waiting to hear you announce what you had intended!—nothing else!—in order then to fall upon us both.

You thought I did not hear you because of the noise. You asked me again. How magnificent you were! You looked at me and believed in me. It was the most beautiful sight I have ever seen, or ever shall see.

But the dread became greater! I did not think. It was deeper than anything I could have imagined. A "No" burst forth within me with the force of a man struggling for his life.

TORA PARSBERG.

You only whispered it.

PAUL LANGE.

At the same time it caused me such excruciating pain. [*Overcome.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

Listen to me now! Do listen!

PAUL LANGE.

[*In despair.*] So you do not yet understand

me? That this dread is stronger than I, stronger than you. Against it no words can avail. Do understand that it can destroy whatsoever we may decide upon. Since yesterday it has been my master. The fall was too great! I cannot now be saved.

TORA PARSBERG.

You are ill! You are ill! To me you are a changed being!

PAUL LANGE.

Since yesterday, yes! There is an end to everything. Even to what a man can lose, and yet live —and even endure! Endure! What we can lose, and yet endure. My power of resistance—if I still have any—grows weaker from the very help you offer. Weaker! Surely you must be convinced of it, since you yourself saw it yesterday. It only frightens me still more. I must speak out. For now nothing must be concealed! You must reckon with this. To overlook it will only lead to a still greater disaster, more than either of us can bear. Oh, God help us both!

[MISS PARSBERG *bursts into tears, then into violent sobbing, which she cannot suppress.* LANGE *becomes greatly alarmed and rushes to her side.*]

I told you so! It would be too much for you! I told you so!

[*Tries to help her to a seat, but she does not at once perceive his intention.*]

For mercy's sake, forgive me! That I should think only of my own sufferings and not of yours! To see you suffer is still more terrible! That I had still to learn. [*Has succeeded in getting her to sit down, and kneels by her side.*] But listen to me! Look at me! Oh that I had listened to you when you said that I could not endure this! Only now do I know what it means. Forgive me! One has no right to let his grief go out over others. And over you, who would sacrifice yourself to save me. I have acted——oh, but listen to me!

TORA PARSBERG.

But you will not listen to *me!* [*Sobs again.*]

PAUL LANGE.

Yes, yes, I will! Anything rather than have you so unhappy! Comfort me! There is nothing I wish for more! My grief carried me too far! Imagine to yourself: the greatest prize that life can offer . . . to be within your reach, and then to lose it—yes, it has made me mad! You, who understand everything, you will forgive? Will you not? Grief, you see, is like a whirlwind.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Has gradually overcome her tears.*] It is not—

it is not that you do not—that you do not let me speak!—No. It is not that which—which wounds me. If it were only that!—No, it is——

[*Is compelled to stop.*]

PAUL LANGE.

[*In despair.*] I told you so! I knew that you could not get an insight into such weakness, and such suffering, without——

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Firmly.*] No, no, no, it is not that either! I can endure anything and everthing where you are concerned. But it overwhelms me that you should think thus of yourself! It must kill you! Yes, I speak as things are. And to think that I may not help you! [*Overcome.*]

PAUL LANGE.

I ask you—I ask you to tell me where I have failed!

TORA PARSBERG.

There is so much exaggeration in every word you speak, that it cuts through me like a false note!

PAUL LANGE.

Guide me! You know I have no higher wish.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Entreatingly,*] Then you must strike another key!

PAUL LANGE.

Another key?

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Without letting herself be interrupted.*] Else we shall be playing wildly out of tune, you and I! This injustice to yourself, this cruelty, is what I cannot bear! No, I cannot bear it!

PAUL LANGE.

Tell me everything!

TORA PARSBERG.

It degrades you! What can it be that has forced you thus on your knees? Forces, which have no right to rule over any one, and least of all over a man like you!

[*Her voice grows stronger and stronger. She and* LANGE *rise from their seats.*]

If the best among us are to submit, how will things then go?

Do you not see what you are doing? You stand on guard before a cage of wild beasts, and then you open the door, so that they can get out and tear

you first of all, and then us, to pieces! Then it is that I cry out for help with all my strength: help, help!

I mean to fight them! That is why I came here; I came to take up the fight!

And I must begin here, now—with you!

I will not allow you to yield! You are stronger than all the others put together. And you have more to live for than hundreds—than hundreds of thousands of them!

PAUL LANGE.

Do you understand how long I have held out?

TORA PARSBERG.

Never long enough! Party persecution, vilification, fanaticism, envy, the hatred of the rabble —are they to be victorious? Do I understand what you have said? Yes! but do you know what I also understand? That those wounds are poisoning your blood, so that your enemies will have you at their mercy—they, who are so—— and you, who are so noble!

PAUL LANGE.

You forget that even Arne Kraft was one of them!

TORA PARSBERG.

You forget that no one, not even I, has a higher opinion of you than he! And in that he is right—but his words, prompted by party passion, are wrong.

It befits you, Paul Lange, to reckon with large factors. Then you rally your energies; then you are yourself!

PAUL LANGE.

But do you know that last night—for I did not sleep, I was awake the whole night—I was reckoning things up. Last night I felt that even if I had the energy—and I believe I have—it is not weak men like me who carry things through successfully.

TORA PARSBERG.

But you have carried through so many things successfully.

PAUL LANGE.

Last night I compared myself with those who have. I compared myself . . . [*Stops.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

I will finish! You compared yourself with those who put the frame round society or kept the frame together.

PAUL LANGE.

Yes! How can you——?

TORA PARSBERG.

You did wrong in that, my friend! Society to-day has other aims and must have other men.

PAUL LANGE.

But one's doubts—that such doubts can arise, is not that alone proof that——?

TORA PARSBERG.

With whom do such doubts arise? With no one so often and so earnestly as with those who are equal to their task and who love their work. Whenever they overtax themselves they become a prey to these doubts.

PAUL LANGE.

[*His face lightening.*] If you are right——?

TORA PARSBERG.

They burrow down to the blackest, most hidden depths in quest of their true selves. You cannot purchase great things cheaper. First to the depths of yourself, and thence to the heights. The road thither begins with self-inflicted anguish.

PAUL LANGE.

If you could but give me back my courage?

TORA PARSBERG.

And your position!

PAUL LANGE.

[*Entreatingly.*] Will you answer me candidly?

TORA PARSBERG.

Yes.

PAUL LANGE.

And conceal nothing from me?

TORA PARSBERG.

No!

PAUL LANGE.

Can you—can you have any respect for such a weak man as I—for such a weak man?

TORA PARSBERG.

That was what I wanted to speak to you about before you asked. But come and sit down.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Promptly and eagerly.*] Yes, yes!

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Kneeling before him.*] No, let me! You know not what I kneel before. Before that which is weak in you and which now makes you so unhappy. In its innermost recesses it is the best thing in you. Only it can no longer tolerate the company it has got into.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Alarmed. In surprise.*] That is so.

TORA PARSBERG.

Not at any price, not even the highest.

PAUL LANGE.

[*As before.*] That is so.

TORA PARSBERG.

You would rather be by yourself. You would shut the door between them and yourself. You are too proud to——

PAUL LANGE.

[*Whispers.*] You see everything. [*Louder, but anxiously.*] But is there not weakness in this also?

TORA PARSBERG.

So sensitive, so thin-skinned, must those be who

are to discover that others suffer, and that there is danger at hand—they must be timid and frail in themselves. To bear the healing balm the weaker vessels are chosen, not the iron kettles. They must not be weighted with selfishness, and therefore they are often weak.

PAUL LANGE.

This comes from heaven!

TORA PARSBERG.

Charity, . . . charity goes about and feels the hands to see whether the skin is sufficiently sensitive. Only to those who possess it are entrusted the great initiatives, to those whom injustice has wounded most deeply, to those who through their own sufferings have learnt to respect misfortune.

PAUL LANGE.

You lift me up.

TORA PARSBERG.

As for your weakness, Paul Lange; it is true that no one quails like you before the battle. But it is also true that no one strikes more powerfully when it is needful. Your horror of evil makes you go far out of your way to avoid it. But then all good influences crowd in upon your heart and claim to be fostered. And then you are like a lion.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Whispers.*] My God——!

TORA PARSBERG.

Timorous as you are—no one would go more calmly to execution than you.

PAUL LANGE.

You think so——?

TORA PARSBERG.

And what to many would be far more difficult: you would give all you possess, piece by piece—especially if it could be done without any one knowing of it—if you thought it right before God.

PAUL LANGE.

So I would! I know that is true.

TORA PARSBERG.

A man is not the strongest because he comes off victorious. The strongest are those who are in league with the future, and whose work takes root in the minds of men.

PAUL LANGE.

All this I was once capable of saying to myself. . . .

TORA PARSBERG.

And all this you have now forgotten! But we remember it, we women. Here you meet with us. Not those who eat, sleep, and keep themselves on show, but those in whom the instinct of the race is strongest. The future lies in their yearnings, as the statue lies in the marble. Hitherto they have waited in silence—often in tears.

But sometimes—sometimes a woman steps out of the ranks. Take me with you! she cries. Your ideals have been ours eternally! Take me with you for their sake!

PAUL LANGE.

This is intoxicating!

[*Both spring to their feet.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

Life is not life till one has something to live for. Therefore I come to you.

PAUL LANGE.

Life demands that one should make himself deserving of it.

TORA PARSBERG.

Then deserve it!

PAUL LANGE.

In union with you? You and I working together?

TORA PARSBERG.

Is that too little?

PAUL LANGE.

No, no!—the highest I can hope for.

TORA PARSBERG.

To you, I know, I am life, so take me—husband! [*They embrace.*]

[ÖSTLIE *has during the whole of this scene been behind the folding door at the back. At the most crucial moments he has only just been visible, but, at this point, he forgets himself and comes in full view of the audience, but he retires immediately and closes the door.*]

[*After escaping from his embrace.*] And now we set out at once to see the King.

PAUL LANGE.

The King?

TORA PARSBERG.

About the ambassadorship. You must have it!

PAUL LANGE.

That would be some reparation! But——

TORA PARSBERG.

But he wished you to accept it?

PAUL LANGE.

But it is not a king's business to run counter to public opinion.

TORA PARSBERG.

Public opinion? This?

PAUL LANGE.

It will be looked upon as that. And in politics it comes to the same thing. It would not even be right to put forward as Minister a man so universally attacked.

TORA PARSBERG.

Then the matter must be postponed?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Glad.*] Yes, if it is postponed, then there is hope.

TORA PARSBERG.

I will get it postponed!

PAUL LANGE.

You?

TORA PARSBERG.

We will start at once to see the King. I will ask him for an audience and tell him all.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Cheerfully.*] That sounds reasonable! The King is a kind man.

TORA PARSBERG.

And favourably disposed towards you. He has told me so himself.

PAUL LANGE.

[*As before.*] That sounds reasonable! It may improve the whole situation.

TORA PARSBERG.

Yes, don't you think so?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Entirely changed.*] If you can get the matter postponed, all may yet come right. Yes, I am almost sure of it. If only you do not get there too late! For the others are also bestirring themselves.

TORA PARSBERG.

Oh, I shall be there first, you'll see. [*Looks at her watch.*] The train starts in an hour and a half.

PAUL LANGE.

But you are not going abroad?

TORA PARSBERG.

No, only as far as the border—to my estate there. There we rest—there we shall be alone, you and I. Everything is arranged. Then we go on by the night train. Have you any objection?

PAUL LANGE.

Have I any objection to being alone with you ——?

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Takes his hand.*] I long to be in my own rooms, to see you and me before my own mirrors. I must see it—you and me!— —— No, not here! Afterwards, afterwards!

PAUL LANGE.

Yes, afterwards!

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Tears herself loose.*] My things! Ring for my things! [LANGE *rings.*]

[ÖSTLIE *enters with* MISS PARSBERG'S *cloak and hat.*

PAUL LANGE.

Miss Parsberg's things. Yes!

[ÖSTLIE *helps her to put on her cloak, etc., even to her fur-lined overshoes.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

Kristian, can you pack and be ready in a quarter of an hour?

ÖSTLIE.

Yes, madam.

TORA PARSBERG.

Both his Excellency's and your own things?

ÖSTLIE.

Yes, madam.

TORA PARSBERG.

We are going abroad. Will you undertake that you will both be at the station in an hour?

ÖSTLIE.

Yes, madam. But——

TORA PARSBERG.

Have you any buts, Kristian?

ÖSTLIE.

No, madam! But shall I also pack up his Excellency's court dress?

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Laughingly.*] That you can send on to my place!—Now then! [ÖSTLIE *goes out quickly.*]

PAUL LANGE.

[*Rushes up to her.*] To think that you should have come!——

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Retreating backwards.*] Afterwards, afterwards!

PAUL LANGE.

You have done more than you—— [*Stops.*]

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Throwing a hasty glance in the direction of the drawer in the writing-table.*]

Afterwards, afterwards!

[*Makes hurriedly for the door at the back, where she turns round.*]

Au revoir, Paul Lange!

PAUL LANGE.

To see you standing there!

[*After her out into the ante-room.*]

SCENE III.

PAUL LANGE.

[*Returns and walks round the room once or twice without speaking, his face beaming with joy. He stops in front of the drawer in the writing-table.*]

Did she suspect anything?

[*Puts both his outstretched arms before him.*]

Away with you!

[*Walks about the room as if enjoying roaming over all the open space he can find.*]

As with time, so with life—from day to night, from night to day. A moment ago pitch darkness, and now——!

I shall once more come to the front! I am quite sure of it! In spite of all their prophecies! Her breath of life is about me, I breathe in hope. I am borne onwards a thousand miles from here, and many years into the future. Everything has gone from me, except what we two shall go through together.

How she spoke the words "afterwards," "afterwards," "Au revoir, Paul Lange!" I have awakened to a new morning, I stand in the full glow of life.

[*Stops. With sudden transition.*]

But what must she really think? Not to-day, but the next day? When the feeling of victory is

over? My God, I cannot bear any further humiliation—not the least shadow of it!

Well, well, well! Let it come to the test! As soon as I see it—I can take measures against it. There is time enough.

But with doubts—with doubts and fear, I can no longer live! That is settled.

No, I am getting away from her atmosphere. I must get back into it again! I must have her cloak of light around me, until I am on firm ground. I am soaring—I am transported—that is the word. Into her arms—to peace for my work, with honour over my name—without that there is no peace. Now I realise how souls can entwine with each other and soar together towards one goal . . . yes, that is, after all, the highest we can reach in life. And that shall be mine—and what have I then to complain of?

[ÖSTLIE *appears in the door at the back.*]

What is it, Östlie?

ÖSTLIE.

A telegram, your Excellency!

PAUL LANGE.

[*Reads the telegram. Then reads it once more and presses the hand in which he holds it against his breast. In great pain.*]

No—! No—! These sudden reverses—I will have no more of them. No one can bear it!

[*The telegram falls to the ground. He twists both his arms round his head.*]

This comes from the unknown place where the votes over one are collected and counted. All is settled.

[ÖSTLIE *has taken up the telegram and reads it on his way to the table, where he puts it. Rushes terror-stricken, but silently, out of the room.*]

If this had only been settled in private! if only I had been passed over in silence, so that no one knew anything definite!—But now? Now it will be known that I have been discarded—thrown overboard. Those who are responsible for this will see to that! God forgive them; by this act they have sealed my disgrace.

What I thought of last night was the right thing. What she persuaded me to believe was wrong. And I shall act accordingly!

The others have been earlier astir. Hate travels faster.

Am I to continue to work with these people? To pay with all this amount of ignominy for the chance of keeping on with them—to drag her with me into this!

[*A shudder passes through his frame.*]

In this no one must interfere! A man must himself know when it is time for him to go.

[*He goes firmly and quickly towards the writing-table, unlocks the drawer, takes*

out the case and puts it in his pocket, leaving the drawer open. Warmly and with sincerity.]

I act according to the best of my convictions. No man can do more. And no judge can fail to see it. [*Bends his head.*]

[ÖSTLIE *enters.*]

Are you there? I have nothing for you to do just now.

ÖSTLIE.

May I telephone to Miss Parsberg?

PAUL LANGE.

[*Looks at him.*] Have you read it——?

ÖSTLIE.

Forgive me, your Excellency!

PAUL LANGE.

Afterwards, Östlie. Afterwards. [*To himself.*] My God, that word! [*Much affected, but collects himself soon.*] I am going in to change my clothes.

ÖSTLIE.

Shall I help your Excellency?

PAUL LANGE.

No, I can manage by myself.

ÖSTLIE.

But you will not be able to find your things—I had begun to . . .

PAUL LANGE.

[*Going.*] You can remain here!

ÖSTLIE.

Forgive me, your Excellency, but I have already telephoned. Miss Parsberg will be here in a minute.

PAUL LANGE.

All the more reason for me to make haste! I shall then be ready when she comes.

[*Turns round in the door to* ÖSTLIE, *as he notices that he intends following him.*]

It is my wish that you remain here!

[*Goes into the room on the right and is heard locking the door.*]

ÖSTLIE.

[*Trembling and unable to move from the spot. He sinks down on his knees. Springs suddenly to his feet and puts both his hands to his ears. A shot is fired in the room on the right.* ÖSTLIE *cries out as if he were shot. Sinks down on his knees, then leaps up and runs round the room.*]

Where, where? What shall I do—? I must see him! See him!

[*Rushes out through the door in the background. Soon afterwards he is heard unlocking the door on the right from the inside, and enters, whispering.*]

Horrible! Horrible! [*Runs out at the back.*]

SCENE IV.

TORA PARSBERG.

[*Is heard moaning piteously in the ante-room. Enters in travelling-dress, followed by* ÖSTLIE.]

There? [*Pointing to the door on the right.*]

ÖSTLIE.

There!

TORA PARSBERG.

No, I will not see him! Not yet! My poor . . . I cannot bear it, Kristian!
Is he quite dead?

ÖSTLIE.

Quite dead! Lying on . . .

TORA PARSBERG.

No more! I must have time to . . . !

[ARNE KRAFT *enters in travelling-clothes and sects his hat on distracted. On seeing* MISS PARSBERG *in the room he clasps his hands together.*]

Yes, yes. In there! [*Points to the right.*]

[ARNE KRAFT *goes into the room on the right.*]

If I also could go. It would perhaps make it easier. He would give me of his goodness still. And I need it. Oh, how I suffer! All of us misused him. We all wanted to manage him . . .!

[ARNE KRAFT *returns. He keeps his face hidden in his handkerchief and shows signs of sobbing.*]

Terrible!

ARNE KRAFT.

My fault!

TORA PARSBERG.

And mine! . . . Or rather not our fault—it lies deeper.

Oh, why must it be that good men are so often martyrs? Shall we never see the day when they become our leaders?

THE END.

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
London & Edinburgh

A LIST OF SOME OF

HARPER & BROTHERS'

NEW AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS

A THOUSAND DAYS IN THE ARCTIC. By FREDERICK G. JACKSON. Two Vols. Demy 8vo, cloth extra, gilt top. 32s.

A FLORAL FANTASY IN AN OLD ENGLISH GARDEN. With facsimile reproductions of 48 full-page water-colour drawings, end papers, cover designs, &c. By WALTER CRANE. Demy 4to. 10s. 6d.

THE ASSOCIATE HERMITS. By FRANK R. STOCKTON. Author of "The Great Stone of Sardis." Crown 8vo, cloth extra. 6s.

THE ROMANTIC HISTORY OF ROBIN HOOD. By BARRY PAIN. Illustrated by A. FORRESTIER. Crown 8vo, cloth extra. 6s.

THE ADVENTURERS. By H. B. MARRIOTT WATSON. Illustrated. Crown 8vo, cloth extra. 6s.

THE DUENNA OF A GENIUS. By M. E. FRANCIS, Author of "A Daughter of the Soil," "In a North Country Village," &c. Crown 8vo, cloth extra. 6s.

A WORLD BEWITCHED. By JAMES M. GRAHAM, Author of "The Son of the Czar." Crown 8vo, cloth extra. 6s.

HARPER AND BROTHERS
45 ALBEMARLE STREET, W.